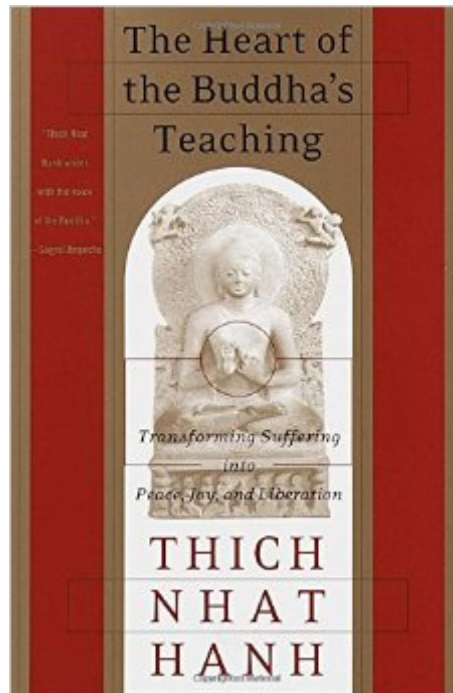


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# The Heart Of The Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering Into Peace, Joy, And Liberation





to understand others or myself better? Will this teach me to be more loving, to live more mindfully, with more compassion? From this point of view, this is a wonderful book. Not because it answers all questions (or any questions for that matter). If anything it creates more ambiguities, it raises more challenges. That is a good thing. Many of the other reviewers seem to react to Thich Nhat Hahn based on whether or not his is the True Buddhism or just one man's opinion. Fair enough. But unless you are so fortunate as to have some sort of satori or God decides to drop in for a chat what else do you ever have but one person's opinion? It seems to me that what we all do is find something that seems to make sense to you, a practice that carries you along your path and you practice. Thich Nhat Hahn will help most readers to do this. This is a man of extraordinary faith who is apparently equally diligent in trying to live his faith. I do not know about the other readers but this man is a wonderful and unnerving challenge to me in my ideas on how to live my life. Throughout the book the author suggests very simple practices to improve mindfulness and diligence. He calls us back to the breath always. In my experience, whether doing yoga, tai chi, chi-kung, kung fu, meditation or just plain living this is always the beginnings of real practice. The presentation of Buddhist dogma that the other reviewers find so wonderful or controversial is, I believe, very well done and is as clear as could be hoped. It is also very arcane. I was not aware that there were Twelve Levels of Independent Co-Arising, Seven Factors of Awakening, Six Paramitas, Five Powers, Four Immeasurable Minds, Three Bodies of Buddha, Two Truths and, yes, a Partridge in a Pear Tree. Sorry, I could not help myself. My point is that a lot of this part of the book is probably most useful after having been read, lived and read again. For someone looking for a true introduction, this part of the book will seem a little much. Parts of it seem a little PC as well such as the occasional emphasis on sex abuse. I cannot imagine that was a burning issue back in the days of the Buddha. This is not a problem for me- it just shows that the author's religion is a living one. Wonderfully though, what also comes through, is the author's spirit- that of a gentle, compassionate and strong person. I have not read any of his other books. After this I will read more. I have already found some of the practices helpful and will continue to try to integrate them into my life. Give this book a chance. I do not think it will answer all of your questions. How nice would that be if we could get that from a book? It will give you a deeper understanding of Buddhist's beliefs and practices. Some of the practices suggested may help you to live your life. What more could you hope for?

Of all the books I have read and enjoyed by Thich Nhat Hanh, this is the one of the most comprehensive, inspiring and practical. His introduction to the Four Noble Truths is simply written,

easy to understand, and yet lacks not one bit in depth. Like all his books, this one helps us to integrate Buddhist ideas into our everyday life without becoming too encumbered with terminology. Although Thich Nhat Hanh does tend to repeat himself in subtle ways, within this book and across his other books, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* seems to integrate many of his ideas into one very coherent and practical treatise on the nature suffering as one of the most basic human conditions we spend our lives trying to accept, or possibly escape. He makes the Buddhist concepts of attachment to objects and people very clear in relationship to human suffering and then highlights the path of well-being, peace and liberation from it. If I was stuck on an island and could bring a few books, this would be one at the top of the list. It's a reminder that much of our suffering is self-created and an illusion. In the same way we imprison ourselves mentally, is the way we begin to liberate ourselves. Freedom and liberation come from within and are possible even under the most extreme, excruciating and trying conditions. I highly recommend this book, and especially to those who are having difficulty dealing with the loss of a loved one (or loss in general) and those who are imprisoned mentally (with fear), or even physically incarcerated.

This book is probably the single best book for those interested in learning the fundamentals of Buddhism, as well as for those looking for a guidebook to refine and contemplate their Buddhist views. Thich Nhat Hanh is living testimony that Buddhist practice can transform a life of suffering and despair into one of peace and joy. His books were the start of my path and this book is almost like a handbook to the four noble truths and the eightfold path, as well as other fundamental thoughts of Buddhists. The language does get somewhat abstract and spiritual and may require some re-reading by some, especially those with no previous exposure to Buddhism. Otherwise, the best book covering fundamental Buddhism I've ever read.

This book is the cure to all those [ ] self-help type introductions to Buddhism you see these days. This is far from a scholarly book, only suited for dry academics, but at the same time, it doesn't pigeon-hole all of the Buddha's teachings into a few maxims for the Busy American to absorb on the way to the gym or work. I can't guarantee that you'll become a Buddhist after reading this, or even have much desire to (I know I didn't), but I simply do not see how you can walk away from it without some insight into how you live your life. At the very least, this book will cause you to locate your own self-deprecating actions and stop them (without being new-age-y, or full of [ ] pop psychology). At best, this will cause you to start your life along the middle path. More likely than not, though, you'll end up some where in the middle, like I did. I read this at a very hard point in my life,

and I can tell you that it was one of the main reasons I was pulled out of that funk. It helped me to understand why we suffer, and how to escape the cycle of pain and humiliation. Highly Recommended.

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