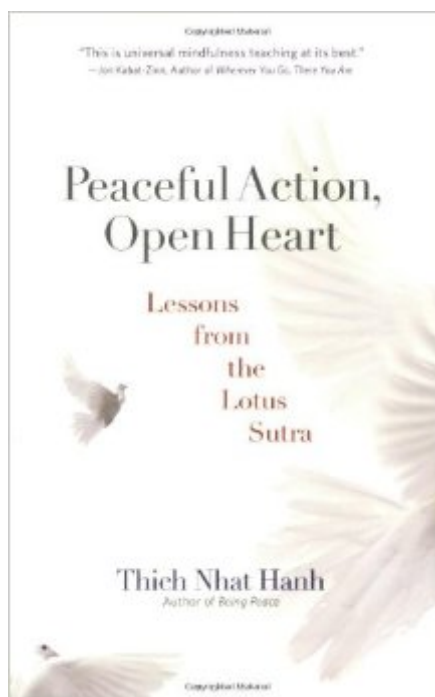


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Peaceful Action, Open Heart: Lessons From The Lotus Sutra



Synopsis

Peaceful Action, Open Heartshines 60 years of study and practice upon one of the crowning scriptures of the path of the Buddha, and is destined to be known as one of the most significant writings by Thich Nhat Hanh. The Lotus Sutra is one of the most revered of Mahayana sacred texts and is sometimes called "the king of sutras." Despite this fact, there are very few commentaries in English available today. Thich Nhat Hanh explores the Sutra's main theme-- that everyone has the capacity to become a Buddha, and that Buddha-nature is inherent in everything--but he also uniquely emphasizes the Sutra's insight that Buddha-nature is the basis for peaceful action. Since we all will one day become a Buddha, he says, we can use mindfulness practices right now to understand and find solutions to current world challenges. In his interpretation of the sutra, he suggests that if the practices, views, and insights of the Lotus Sutra would find application not only by individuals but also by nations, it would offer concrete solutions to transform individual suffering and the global challenges facing the world today. Stamped with his signature depth of vision, lucidity, and clarity, Thich Nhat Hanh's insights based on the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra invoke a wide range of contemporary topics and concerns, such as the Palestinian-Israeli war, the threat of terrorism, and the degradation of our environment. In proposing radical new ways of finding peaceful solutions to universal, contemporary conflicts, he not only challenges the U.N to change from an organization to a real organism working for peace and harmony in the world, but also encourages all branches of all governments to act as Sangha. In so doing, he demonstrates the practical and direct applicability of this sacred text to today's concerns. This book has been re-released with a new title. The earlier hardcover edition was entitled Opening the Heart of the Cosmos.

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Customer Reviews

This is Thich Nhat Hanh's commentary on a highly revered and influential Mahayana sutra, the Lotus Sutra. If you are not familiar with Thich Nhat Hanh, he is one of the most revered Buddhist teachers alive today, a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, teacher, and peace and human rights activist. He is best known for his teachings on 'engaged Buddhism', in which he advocates a combination of mindfulness practice and social engagement as the heart of the bodhisattva path. Peaceful Action, Open Heart can be read as a companion to the Lotus sutra, or independently. The Lotus sutra is notoriously hard to read, especially for those new to sutra reading, and part of the purpose of this book is to make it accessible to anyone. Thich Nhat Hanh first outlines the historical context for this sutra, and the tensions that existed when it first surfaced between the 'conservative' and 'progressive' schools of Buddhism. He writes that the Lotus sutra was the first sutra to "use loving speech and...accept all schools and tendencies of Buddhism. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra is like a cool breeze, a gentle rain, assuaging the stifling atmosphere" present at the time. The Lotus sutra is also the first sutra to proclaim that "everyone can become a Buddha", which is "the great insight of the Mahayana." In this sense it is THE defining sutra of the Mahayana tradition, of which both Zen and Tibetan Buddhism (among others) descend. It rejuvenated Buddhism at the time, and laid the groundwork for the creation of sanghas that included both monks and lay practitioners. As Thich Nhat Hanh puts it, "The two traditions were unified as the One Vehicle that can carry all beings to the shore of liberation." The first two Parts of this book follow the order of the Lotus sutra, elucidating the primary lessons of each chapter, and distinguishing between the 'historical' and 'ultimate' dimensions present within the text. The first is the "door of history, the events we experience and what we can see and know in our lifetimes." Within the Lotus sutra, this is the historical details of the Buddha's life and teachings. The ultimate dimension is that of "ultimate reality, which goes beyond time and space." The Buddha's teachings, and the true Buddha, exist here too. Everything, particularly dharma teachings, participate in both dimensions - they are comparable to a wave and the ocean. A wave can be identified as distinct within space and time, but is never separate from its ultimate dimension as water. In the same way, the Lotus sutra needs to be read and understood along both dimensions. After exploring both the historical and ultimate chapters of the Lotus sutra, Thich Nhat Hanh defines the 'action dimension'. As he puts it, "how can

we help people of the historical dimension get in touch with their ultimate nature so that they can live joyfully in peace and freedom?" This is the bodhisattva path, and here he offers concrete practice examples for living as a bodhisattva within the modern world. Peaceful Action, Open Heart is for anyone that would like to explore an actual Buddhist sutra in depth, but from a personal practice perspective, rather than an academic one. You don't need to read the Lotus sutra itself to benefit from it, or have any detailed knowledge of Mahayana. At the same time, if you do have this knowledge, you will no doubt still gain much new understanding.

Peaceful Action, Open Heart: Lessons from the Lotus Sutra is one of Thich Nhat Hanh's best writings to date. His commentary on the Lotus Sutra is heartfelt and very accessible, making clear some complex ideas and topics. I enjoyed reading Thich Nhat Hanh's Peaceful Action, Open Heart along with The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic by Gene Reeves, which is also available on . Initially, I had paged through The Lotus Sutra and even though it is a contemporary translation, I felt daunted by its diversity of subject matter and things unfamiliar to me. Then, when I decided to read Peaceful Action, Open Heart in a virtually chapter by chapter manner along with the Lotus Sutra, the undertaking cleared up many obstacles and made the journey through the text an enjoyable undertaking.

Being a very devout Buddhist I sought to explore what is known to be one of the most important Mahayana texts which is entitled in the west as the "Lotus Sutra". I admit that I was annoyed at the blatant magical and fake elements which saturate the Sutra, however this book has clarified all my problems with the Lotus Sutra! Thich Naht Hanh uses his scholarly brilliance to express the fact that the Lotus Sutra is not in fact a testimony of the real Buddha, but is in fact in a sense an epoch poem written by Buddhists to clarify some of Buddha's important points etc. etc. etc. Thich Naht Hanh is a master at teaching Buddhism to the western mind!

In this book, one of my favorite teachers, Thich Nhat Hanh, takes on the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. Quoting from the Hurvitz translation of the sutra, Thay distills its fundamental meaning in his own clear and accessible way. I was enriched by this book, and recommend it to all who are interested in Buddhist meditation practice.

Learn who you truly are.... not the body...

Tich Nhat Hanh is always good.

a good read

GREAT !!!

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