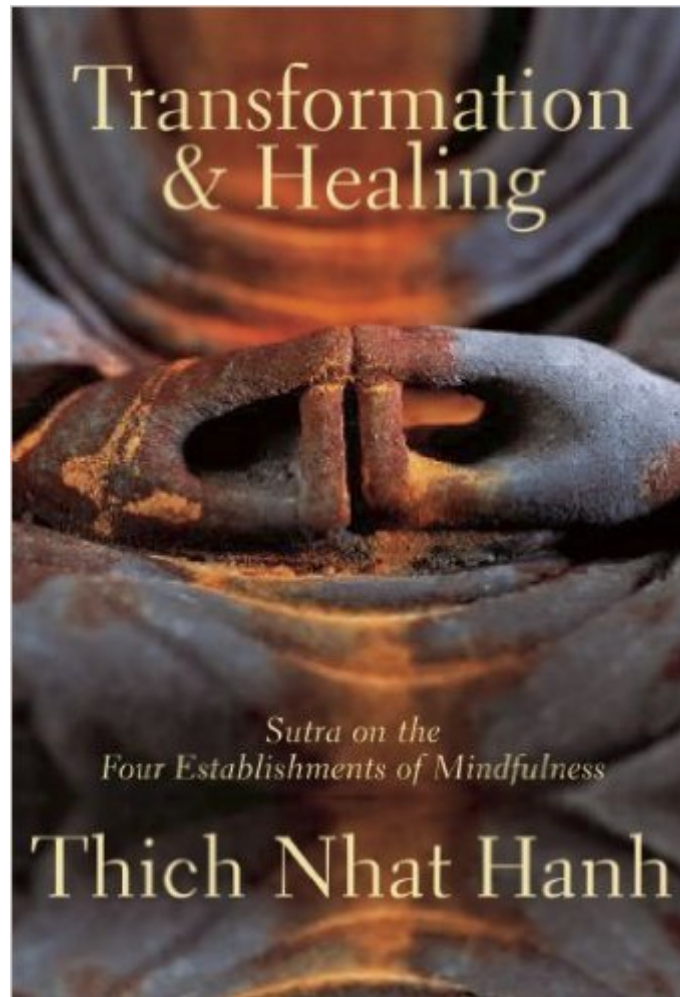


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# Transformation And Healing: Sutra On The Four Establishments Of Mindfulness



## Synopsis

The teachings contained in this The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness are fundamental to the practice of meditation, and constitute the foundation of all mindfulness practice. The Sutra has been studied, practiced and handed down with special care from generation to generation for 2,500 years. In his commentaries Thich Nhat Hanh guides the reader to an understanding of the fundamental basis of the Buddhist practice and encourages application in daily life. It describes the four methods of mindfulness: mindfulness of the body, the feelings, the mind, and the object of mind. It teaches how to deal with anger and jealousy, to nurture the best qualities in our children, spouse, and friends, and to greet death with compassion and equanimity. Three versions of the Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness are presented here, along with Thich Nhat Hanh's insightful commentary and twenty-three exercises-or contemplations-to aid in the practice of mindfulness in daily life. Thich Nhat Hanh's presentation of the sutra is easy to follow making it accessible for novice Buddhist as well as more advanced practitioners. It gives you the basics of breathing and how to use your breathing for meditation and contemplation. With a new introduction by Thich Nhat Hanh.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thich Nhat Hanh's structure of how he presents and reviews the suttas of the Pali cannon is very easy to follow and broken down into manageable portions. For a novice Buddhist like myself, I find this format very helpful. So many other discussions on the suttas make my head spin! In this text, as

in others, the sutta in its entirety is presented in the Theravada translation. He then follows this with a section by section explanation of what the sutta means and how to apply it. The last sections of the book include other translations of the sutta, which are quite interesting because you see how these translations change sometimes the meaning of the sutta. This book is very helpful for beginning meditators as well because it gives you the basics of breathing and how to use your breathing for meditation and contemplation. Once you master one step, the sutta provides you with the next step to take. I am so happy I have found this and the other books by Thich Nhat Hanh. My life is already the better for it.

This is the author's presentation of the Satipatthana Sutra, the basic sutra on mindfulness. As in all of his works he does the work of a good Dharma teacher very well. He keeps his own personality and teaching idiosyncrasies out of the way so that the student's understanding can arise naturally. There are more elaborate and academic descriptions of the Sutra available and more detailed descriptions of how to use the Sutra in meditation. But this is good basic information presented in a good manner with no frills or personal quirks. The author gives a good commentary on the Sutra and explains why he translates certain passages, but he also gives the alternate interpretations. This is a fine basic introduction to the central issue in Vapassana meditation. Highly recommended.

No one explains the essential elements of Buddhism better Thich Nhat Hanh. Here he continues to examine the basic teachings of meditation as taught by the Buddha and handed down through the Pali Canon. A perfect companion to his book, *Breathe! You Are Alive*, this work carefully explains for both the novice and more experienced practitioner the nuances of deeper meditation techniques as laid out in the Satipatthana Sutta. Thich Nhat Hanh writes with clarity and makes the joy of meditation accessible to everyone with the desire find true happiness.

If you really practice the meditation techniques of this book you will change your life. Thich Nhat Hanh talks in details about the Satipatthanasutta and how to practice the Sutta in the daily life. He uses to explain all his interpretation presenting a Sutta as source.

I picked up this book mainly because my sangha uses it but also because it contains translations from the other versions of the Satipatthana sutta contained in the Chinese canon. To be honest, I am not impressed. Thich Nhat Hanh does provide translations of the Pali version as well as two other Chinese versions of the sutra, and this is probably the most interesting and informative part of

this book. However, the explication itself leaves much to be desired. The first section on mindfulness of the body for example, contains some pretty unfounded characterizations of "some practitioners and commentators" which "attach too much importance to the realization of states of concentration of the four form jhanas" (p42). Nhat Hanh quickly goes on to dismiss practitioners of jhana (a large portion of most Theravada Buddhism) because in his words "he [the Buddha] rejected them [jhanas] as not leading to liberation from suffering. These states of concentration probably found their back into the sutras around two hundred years after the Buddha passed into mahaparanirvana" (p44). This statement is baffling, all of the suttas/sutras are full of references to the jhanas, the mahaparinibbana sutta, which recounts the final nirvana of the Buddha, has the Buddha using the jhanas just before entering final nirvana ("And the Blessed One entered the first jhana. Rising from the first jhana, he entered the second jhana...etc etc - Digha Nikaya 16). Not only that, but Nhat Hanh seemingly ignores the fact that the very sections he later quotes which note that the meditator should be mindful on feelings of joy and happiness (piti and sukha) indicate that jhana is present, as both of these are jhanic factors commonly used in the formula for jhanic attainments. If Nhat Hanh has some serious textual evidence backing up this claim that the Buddha rejected jhana, I surely would like to see it, otherwise it is a seriously radical statement with nothing behind it. It only serves to alienate any practitioners who take jhana seriously. Nhat Hanh also seemingly ignores some aspects of Satipatthana meditation completely. On the section for the "Impure, un-attractive" (asubha) meditations for example, he omits the fact that this type of meditation is supposed to focus on the unattractive nature of parts of the body (to develop un-attachment), and just says we should be mindful of various parts of the body "to be in contact with the body" and to "notice its true nature" which apparently means that "Every hair on your head...contains the entire universe"(53). This is a nice sentiment, but surely not what we are supposed to be doing while recollecting blood, pus, bile, excrement, etc. The latter parts of this textual commentary or guide is also not very helpful. The section on the five hindrances for example, seems to only focus on a few emotions and ignores others (Nhat Hanh does not give an overview of how we are to deal with the hindrance of sloth-torpor for example). The section on the seven factors of awakening only mentions joy and all the other factors are not so much as enumerated, much less properly defined or dealt with. Thus, the practitioner reading this book has the translated text in the front of the book, but not much (much needed) explication about what to do in regards to these sections of the sutra. My final gripe is that the section on the four noble truths, which is the last contemplation of the dhamma/dharma contemplations is also not dealt with here. All in all this book is incomplete, it "guides the reader to an understanding of the fundamental basis" of only a part of satipatthana practice, not the whole

thing. I therefore recommend Venerable Analayo's masterful "Satipatthana: The direct path to realization" for a full and scholarly overview of all the complex issues and nuances of language of satipatthana practice. If you're really interested in learning about this ancient meditation text, you will do the work required and not settle for less.

This Sutra is vital to anyone wanting to understand how to follow the path of Buddhism. As Thich Nhat Hahn states in the commentary, "This Sutra has been handed down and practiced for over 2500 years. Just reading through the Sutra itself, before reading the commentary, you can see that mindfulness needs to be a part of every aspect of your life from seated meditation, to walking, sitting, smelling, tasting, hearing, touching, and everything you do. Then Thich Nhat Hahn proceeds to succinctly and simply explain the Sutra in a scholarly way and with the voice of a Bodhisattva, clearly and simply breaking it down, explaining what each section means and gives you exercises for how to practice what you are learning. This Sutra is on a par with the Diamond Sutra and Heart Sutra, in terms of its profundity and importance for learning how to follow Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hahn lays this book out in such a way that it is easy to follow, easy to read, and helps you not to be overwhelmed with the vast amount of information and instruction this Sutra discusses.

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