

**True Power** – *Talk from 01 Oct 2006 Part I*

**Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh**  
*Deer Park Monastery*

*You have to allow the truth to penetrate, because when you have ideas, that maybe an obstacles; and the secret of Buddhism is to remove all ideas and all concepts in order for the truth to has a chance to penetrate and to rebuilt itself.*

This is Sister Susan from Deer Park Monastery in hills over Escondido, California. Today October 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, we have a talk for you given by our teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, given this morning in France, entitled the True Nature of Power. This talk will be included in his upcoming book on “Power” to be publish next year.

If you have any feed back or comments we would like you to email it to the following email [dpcast@gmail.com](mailto:dpcast@gmail.com) we would like you to find a comfortable position and be with your breathing and enjoy the talk and take it all in as its a very very profound talk, so enjoy your breathing and the talk. Thank you.

Good morning dear sangha, today is October the 1<sup>st</sup> the year 2006, we are in assembly of meditation hall. I read somewhere in the newspaper in France, 400 thousand people fall down and get hurt, many went to hospital and nine thousand people die because of the fall down, we have to be mindful when we climb the stair, how we go down the stair, and I remember two years ago I was climbing mountain in North Vietnam, I had a lot of pain on my left shoulder, that made it more difficult, because climbing in that you need arms in order to cling to trees and branches, when you are not very sure of your steps, happily nothing happened, and I arrived safely on top of the mountain and went down safely.

In Vietnam does still has a lot of bamboo bridges that help us crossing the river, just one bamboo trunk for you to step on and then another bamboo trunk for you to step on, you have to grasp on it in order not to fall into the river, and sometime farmer has to carry a very heavy load of hay in order to cross the river in that way.

This is about our body concerning our mind, we have to be mindful also because it can fall down, while we are having a mental formation, when we are disperse, dispersion; when we are angry, anger; when we are confuse, confusion; we may fall dawn, you got hurt mentally, you got lost, that is why we need some kind of guide, some kind of refuge, something that we can grasp in order not to fall down.

Probably we have many wonderful gathas or short poems for us to practice, we combine our breathing with these poems in order to through difficult moments of our mind. It's very good if you can memorize this gathas, when everytime you are about going through difficulty moment, you may need to practice these gathas, combine with your in and out breath, you are safe if you know hoe to go through these difficult moments, moment of dispersion, moment of anger, moment of confusion, moment of despair and so on.

One of the poem that I practice most is, "My journey back to Island of myself", this poem is available in Vietnamese, English, French, and so on. During the time you practice this gatha you take refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You are holding something firmly, you do not risk falling mentally in a very sub-despair of confusion and so on.

I believe this gatha can be found in the sentient book, it is very good if you can memorize them and learn to practice them in your daily life, to make it into a habit, in every time you are not walking very solidly insight, you remember to use the gatha and your mindful breathing in order to go through this moment.

When you do not have a problem, practicing this gatha will help you to take refuge and get in touch with wonder of life, insight around you, this practice can be very nourishing, healing and transforming, you don't need to have a problem or period of difficulty in order to begin practicing.

While practicing this gatha, we generate a kind of energy, a kind of power, it helps us to stand firm to walk firmly, to safely through difficult moment in our daily life. This kind of power or energy is called the energy or power of

mindfulness. Mindfulness is a kind of energy that you can generate in your daily life, the energy of mindfulness is protecting you, you are solid, you are safe.

### **The First Energy : Faith**

In Buddhist tradition we speak of 5 kind of powers, the first power is confidence, faith. You have faith in the Buddha within, the Buddha not as a god, but the Buddha is a energy of awakening, energy of compassion, energy of understanding, we do have the capacity to understand, to be compassionate, to be mindful. This is the Buddha in a concrete term, he is not a god, but he is as an energy.

So, you believe you have confidence, you trust this kind of energy is inherent in you, if you know how to practice, you can generate that energy, this kind of energy in order to protect yourself, and to succeed in what you want to look.

You have to trust in the Dharma, because the Dharma is effective, if you put into practice the Dharma, you will overcome the difficulties, you would be able to nourish yourself to transform yourself. The Dharma as practice not as words. Suppose you have learned how to do walking meditation, if you walk properly, then every step can bring you solidity, freedom, joy, and nourishment, it can bring concentration.

Walking meditation is a practice that can bring result right here and right now, as soon as you begin to do walking, you are feeling that you are safe, you have arrived, you are at home, and you enjoy every step, you become more solid, you are free from wandering in the past, future, and so on. So the Dharma is effective right here and right now, because you have practice, you have experience the effectiveness of the practice, that is why you have faith in the dharma, you have confidence in the Dharma.

Every time when you feel anger is going up, you practice mindful breathing, recognize the anger, embrace your anger, then the anger can not push you to do

or say things that can destroy, because you have the practice and you know that the practice is effective. Do you know how to recognize your anger, how to embrace your anger? You feel safe with that practice, so you know that the practice is effective, you have faith in that practice, you have faith in the Dharma.

You are in dispersion, you hear the bell of mindfulness, you stop, you thinking, you stop your dispersion, then you become mindful, you listen to the bell, you smile, you breath in and out, that is the Dharma, Dharma help you to the practice of listening to the bell, bring you back to here and now, so you become fully alive, fully present, and touching life deeply. So every time you hear the bell, mindfulness, joy become possible. That is why you have faith, you have faith in the Dharma. Faith here also faith in the Dharma.

You have faith in Sangha, Sangha is the community that support you, embrace you, guide you in the practice. With the Sangha you always feel safe, you feel love, you feel brotherhood and sisterhood. You have faith in Sangha, without Sangha you feel lost. That is why confidence in the Sangha is something you feel.

So, faith here is not to believe in something abstract that you can control, to believe in a deity or a god, but faith here is trust of the effectiveness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha inherent in you. You bring the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with you, in you body and mind, in every moment of your daily. So faith is confidence, a kind of energy that give you much power.

### **The Second Energy : *Diligent***

The second kind of power is diligent, you are capable of practicing, but you keep the practice steady, you don't abandon the practice, you practice regularly with the support of Sangha that is diligent. You do the sitting everyday, you do the walking everyday, you do the mindful breathing everyday, you eat mindfully everyday, your practice is nourish, your practice is continue, your practice is steady, that is the second source of power. You are able to do it, but you are not to do it in order to prove that you are able to do it. You do it and you do it

everyday, that is diligent. The point is not to do to prove that you are able to do it. The point is you do it regularly for your wellness, for your well being.

Diligent is described in a very concrete term in Buddhist teaching. When the negative thinking has not manifest, you arrange so that it has no chance to manifest, that is the first point.

*The First Aspect of Practice: “Not to turn on these negative seeds”*

We have a seed of anger, a seed of despair, seed of jealousy in us; if we live in a bad environment, the environment can touch off and turn on these seeds. We have a seed of craving, seed of violent, seed of hate and anger, if you lived in a good environment, these seeds can not touch and can not turn on easily, that is why very wise of you to pursue a good environment, so these negative seeds could not be touch to many times everyday, you don't allow this is to be touch by other people around you, and you don't allow yourself to touch and to turn on these seeds.

When you watch television or you watch a film full of violent, then you touch the seed of violent in you, you turn the seed of violent on, so most of us not used to watch television, not to watch this kind of film that contain violent, hate, and craving.

So the first point is not to turn on these negative seeds, not allowed the environment to turn them on, that is the practice, you may need your Sangha to help you in order to be in a good environment.

*The Second Aspect of Practice: “The Way to Stop their Manifestation”*

The second aspect of practice is, if this is happened that one of these seed is turn on, the seed of despair, the seed of anger, the seed of violent is turn on, you should know the way in order to help them to stop their manifestation and to go back to its original form as a seed.

In Buddhist psychology, we speak about consciousness in term of seeds, the

Sanskrit word is Bija, in our consciousness there are many seeds, good seeds like the seed of compassion, understanding, non discrimination, joy, love, and so on; but there are bad seeds like anger, violent, hate, and despair.

If it is happened that one of the bad seed is touched and turned on, when the seed is turned on it become a mental formation (Samskara), Bija or a seed, manifest into mental formation (Samskara), you have a seed of anger, when it is touched, when it is turned on become of a mental formation called anger, it is a real energy.

Our consciousness maybe seen as having two layers, the lower part is called *stalled consciousness*, and upper part is called *mind consciousness*, all the seeds down here in stalled consciousness, good and bad seeds, these are called Bija. When one of the seed is turned on or manifest up here, they called mental formation, if by chance, if it happened that the seed of anger is turned on and become a mental formation, then you have to do something, in order to help us, in order to help them to go home or down here, not allow this to stay too long, it only in upper level of mind, because if it stay too long it will cause a lot of destruction. That is the second aspect of practice.

The first aspect of practice is to keep them always there, don't give them a chance to wake up; the second aspect is, if it's happened that one of them has come up, try your best to help it go home as soon as possible. There are so many ways to do so, we should learn not to suppress it, not to try to fight, not try to suppress it, that is the violent way is not recommended in the Buddhist practice.

You recognize it, you smile to it, and you invite something nicer to come up, in order to replace it, you pick up a book, you listen to a piece of music, you do chanting, you do walking meditation, you try to replace it with another mental formation, it's like you have many CD's, if you don't like one, you change it with another Compact Disc. This is the way of training, if it is happened that one of the negative mental formation is manifested, then try to help it go home down here by inviting another mental formation that is more wholesome, beautiful,

positive to happened. This can be done by yourself with or without the help of Sangha, brother or sister in a practice.

*The Third Aspect of the Practice : “Invite a Good Seeds to Manifest”*

The third aspect of the practice is always invite a good good seeds to manifest, you know that you have a seed of love, you have a seed of forgiveness, you have a seed of joy, seed of peace, seed of happiness; you have to learn the way to touch them, to help them to manifest, if you lived in a good environment in a good Sangha, then you have a plenty of sense to have this positive seeds to manifest, so pursue a good environment and ask friend to help you, touch the good thing in you, and to turn them on, that is the third aspect of the practice.

Like in the Plumvillage, from time to time you hear the bell, and when you hear the bell, the seed of mindfulness is turn on, right? In Plumvillage, every morning we do walking meditation, when you join your Sangha to do walking meditation, the seed of mindfulness is turn on, the seed of joy is turn on, that is why we have to be Intelligence, to be smart in our practice, we have to create a good environment, so the good seed in us have a lot of chance to be turn on as a good wholesome mental formation. So we see this is an art, this art is to be cultivated.

*The Fourth Aspect of the Practice : “Keep it in Our Mind as long as Possible”*

The Fourth aspect of the practice is, every time a good mental formation is manifested, try to keep it up here as long as possible, we have to nourish that, to keep it long in our mind, if you have a seed of compassion, a seed of joy, a seed of peace manifested as mental formation that is good for you! Keep it there! Invited to stay here, don't let them go down here; it's like when you have a lovely friend visiting, don't let him go home, keep him or her as long as possible with you, because his or her present bring you a lot joy.

That is the way to generate an energy of diligent, when you have an energy of diligent, you are very joyful, you live you life very deeply, the way you walk, the way you sit, the way you smile, the way you do thing is full of energy. And when you look around you will see people who has that kind of energy, energy of

diligent. People with the energy of diligent, they can achieve a lot of things, they can transform themselves, they can help to transform the community, the world, the environment.

### **The Third Energy : *Mindfulness***

The Third Energy is the energy of Mindfulness. When we have the energy of mindfulness in us, we are fully present, we are fully alive, we lived deeply every moment in our daily life. In the center, practice in Plumvillage, everything we do in our daily is to generate the energy of mindfulness, whether you are cooking, washing, cleaning, sitting, eating is time for you to generate energy of mindfulness, this energy help you to know what we should do, and what should not be done. That energy protect us and shine light on the way of our path.

### **The Fourth Energy : *Concentration***

The Next kind of energy called the energy of Concentration. When you are mindful you become concentrated, and you can go further, you can be more concentrated with the practice of looking deeply, that thing that you have seen but not seen very clearly, now you use the energy of concentration in order to get a breakthrough to see very deeply the nature of what is there.

You have some difficulties, you have your depression, you have your fear, you have your despair, and you want to look deeply into the nature of your affliction in order to be able to get rid of these mental formation, you need a lot of concentration, there are many kind of concentrations that you can cultivate. The concentration of impermanent, the concentration of no self, the concentration of inter beings, the concentration of interconnectedness, many kind of concentrations, the concentration of emptiness; all these concentration can help you to get a breakthrough in order for you to have the fifth kind of energy which is *insight*.

## **The Fifth Energy : *Insight***

Confidence, Diligent, Mindfulness, Concentration and Insight. Insight is a wonderful or powerful concentration, because insight can cut through all kind of afflictions, fear, despair, anger, discrimination. An insight is described as a kind of sword that can cut through all kind of affliction, including despair, including fear.

As a good practitioner you has to learn the art of concentration, in every school of Buddhism, there is a practice of concentration, but that concentrate is to concentrate on something, there are many themes and aspect of the practice has been proposed by the Buddha, like the concentration on impermanent. Impermanent is not just something that negative, impermanent can be very positive.

Everything is impermanent including injustice, poverty, pollution, global warming, and if you know how, know what to do and know what not to do, you can change. That is why the impermanent is not a pessimistic note in the music of life, it can be positive note also.

There is misunderstanding, there is violent, there is a conflict, there is a despair, but even so, these things are also impermanent, because they are impermanent, they can be change into something else. If we know how to be in the present moment, if we know what to do and know what not to do in the present moment.

So with that kind of insight, because the concentrations are impermanent then it will bring us the insight of impermanent, the insight of impermanent will not allow us to be carried away by despair, by anger, by pessimism, because that kind of insight tell us exactly what to do and what not to do in order to change the situation. With impermanent, everything is possible.

No self, no self is another kind of concentration, there can be a lot of sufferings, these kind of sufferings are born on discrimination, on the notion of self and non self.

**True Power** – *Talk from 01 Oct 2006 Part II*

**Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh**

*Deer Park Monastery*

Supposed you are a big brother, a big sister, and when you look at your younger brother or sister you can see that he is you, she is you. Supposed you are a father or a mother, and when you look at your daughter or your son, you will know that she is also you, and he is also you. He is your continuation and she is your continuation, and you touch the nature of no self, and when you are able to touch the nature of no self within you and your daughter, your son, your brother and your sister, your anger will vanish.

You know that his suffering is your suffering, her suffering is your suffering, his happiness is your happiness, and her happiness is your happiness, that kind of concentration help to transform affliction, the suffering, wrong views in you, the concentration of no self will bring the insight of no self, they will liberate you.

If you are in the power of struggle and you suffered because of that and if you know how to meditate on no self, and you will know what to do and what not to do in order to stop the suffering, you own suffering and the suffering of other people in the struggle. When a father is making his son suffered out of anger, he is making himself suffer because his son is his continuation, with that kind of insight he can overcome the suffering. That is why insight is a super kind of power, it can liberate us, in Buddhism we speak of salvation in term of insight, not in term of grace, the insight is fruit of concentration, the insight of nirvana.

A lot of sufferings have been born on the ground of wrong perceptions, discriminations, the notion of self, the notion of birth and death, the notion of being and non-being, the notion of sameness and otherness, the notion of coming

and going, these notions have brought a lot of suffering and fear; Nirvana is the overcoming of all notions, when you are able to concentrate and to touch the nature of nirvana, we are free from these notions and we are also free from the afflictions that are born from these notions.

The concentration on emptiness, the concentration on the silentness, the concentration on the aimlessness, the concentration on inter being, these concentrations are among the concentrations that you can learn from The Buddha in the teaching of Buddhism, if you devote your time to look in at reality with these concentrations, you will have a breakthrough, they could bring you insight, that be able to liberate you from your suffering from the difficult situations.

As far as mindfulness is concern, you know that mindfulness has the power of recognizing, when you are mindful, you are recognizing what is going on, what is happening in here and now. When you recognize something positive, you can enjoy, you can get the nourishment, the healing, just by recognizing this positive element; when something is negative, mindfulness help you to embrace, to get a relief, mindfulness is a kind of energy that can hold the sufferings, the anger, the despair, and if you know how to hold your suffering long enough, you will get a relief, and mindfulness can also help you to practice looking deeply, understanding and releasing.

So mindfulness is a wonderful kind of energy, very powerful, they can help you to nourish yourself and to heal yourself. Concentration can help us to look deeply into the nature of reality and bring about the kind insight that can liberate us from the suffering. You know that in Buddhism we speak a power, not like a kind of power we speak in the world, but we do speak a kind of power, right kind of power that can only make happiness, not sufferings.

In this world, people running after power also, the power that people running after is political power, financial power, and there is the believe that if you got a power, it can bring a lot of happiness to you, but if you look deeply, we see that

many people running after power suffered very much, because it is not easy to get that kind of power.

In the power struggle, those who got some power also suffered, because they can never feel powerful enough, if you think of Mr. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of The UK, of course he got power, but I'm sure he is powerless, he is feeling powerless a lot. You never have enough power and he feel powerless, powerlessness is what his feeling; also if you speak of President Bush, do you know that without making a lot of effort that he feels very very powerless now; to continue or do not continue also difficult, this is like you swallow something and it stayed here, you can not spit it out or you can not got it down. That is the situation of President Bush. Poor president, poor man, you can see that he was suffered very much. He has the most powerful army in the world, he is in the most powerful country at present. The economic of United States of America, even with all this kind of so called power, people feel powerless, suffering, there are a lot of sufferings. You can see that the President is suffering so much, this is the good thing that you are not the president the USA.

[bell]

If you do not practice the five powers, if you do not have the energy of five powers, the powers that described by Buddha, then the power that you hold in your hand will turns against you, because without the five true powers, spiritual powers, you are always abused your power, you can not avoid abusing your power.

Supposed you are a big sister or big brother, there are a tendency for you to abuse, to make use of your power to abuse your younger brother or sister. You are a father or a mother, you know that you are very tempting to use your power of a father or mother to suppress and to control your children, then you create a lot of sufferings for you child and for yourself, many people hate their father and mother because of the mis-used of power, mis-used of authority, you are tempted to do so.

If there is a fight between father and son, that is not an equal fight, because the father always has more power, but this power bring more sufferings to both father and son, father and daughter, so that is why you have to be very careful even if you have a little bit of power only, there is always a temptation to mis-used the power.

***The First Power : “The Virtue of Cutting Off”***

In Buddhism we speak about the power or the authority of a teacher, the real power of the teacher is triple, the first power is '*Duang dEk*', *dEk* is virtue the power, *Duang* means to cut off. Cut off what? Cut of your anger, cut of your craving, cut of your ignorant, you practice the precept, you are gradually cut off your craving, anger, delusion; because of that you have a power; if you are a teacher and you don't have that power then you are not a real teacher and people don't respect you, that is why cutting off bring you power, cutting off what? Cutting off craving, anger and delusion; *Duang dEk*

When you see a big brother or big sister having that kind of virtue, the virtue of cutting off, then you should respect them, whatever he say, you obey him because he or she has that kind of power, that kind of power is not an authority of a big brother or a teacher just because he or she is in that position, but they have the real power, the power of cutting off, the capacity of cutting off the affliction; *Duang dEk*.

***The Second Power : “The Virtue of Offering”***

The second power that a good teacher has is '*Eng dEk*', *Duang* is to cut, *Eng* is to love, you offer your love, you offer your favor, a lot of favor; because you are ready to forgive, you are ready to give favors, you are ready to love, that is why people respect your, people respect you not because you are shouting! You are using your power as a teacher, but because you are giving, you are offering love and favors.

### ***The Third Power : “The Virtue of Insight”***

The third kind of power that a good teacher has is 'Dii dEk', he or she has the insight, *Dii* doesn't mean that he knows many things in sutra, they have accumulated a lot of knowledge of sutra, that is not yet the insight, because there are those who know by heart the Tripitaka, who know a lot about teaching but they don't have insight, they don't have wisdom. So the real teacher is someone who has wisdom, with wisdom they can show you the path how to overcome sufferings.

You are in a difficult situation, you don't know where to go, you are caught! When you come to your teacher, with their wisdom they show you the way, in a few moments you can see a way out, because they have wisdom, because a good teacher has these three kinds of virtues that they have a real power, is not because they have a line of transmission that they have the power. Not because they have the title of dharma teacher then they have power, NO! The title does not give true power. What gives the true power? True Power is *the capacity to cut off, the capacity to offer favors and love, the capacity of having wisdom (insight)*.

Imagine the PM has these three kinds of powers, he will do much better, even he knows how to use the means available to him in order to bring reconciliation, peace and happiness to people in his country, and to the other country as well, that is why we have to look for a power in this way.

People believe that when they have political power, they can do a lot of things for the happiness, even for the happiness for the country and the world, but the reality shows that it is not the case, if you don't have spiritual power, the real kind of power, then you are likely to mis-use your power, and you will cause suffering to yourself and to people around you.

Siddharta, before he left to become a practitioner or a monk, he saw his father as a king having power but feeling helplessness, he saw corruption around him, but his father was not able to remove this corruption, his father still caught in fear, so Siddharta did not want to become a king, to be a political leader, because he

knew that, that kind of power could not make him and people in his country happy. With fear, anger, confusion in us, that kind of power can only bring suffering to us and people around, that is why Siddharta renounced that kind of power and he was looking for another kind of power, a spiritual one. The main reason why Siddharta left the kingdom or renounced the throne, because he saw that the political power can not help him and his country to be happy.

Of course we see a politician and businessman having a power, but if we look deeply we can see that, even with that kind of power these people still suffered a lot, still created a lot of sufferings around them. That is why, now it is time for us to reconsider the idea of power, and change our direction in life.

Rousseau has said something like this, “The one who is the strongest, is never strong enough, the strongest is never strong enough in order always to be the master” *Le plus fort n'est jamais assez fort pour être toujours le maître*, in order always to be the master or boss.

The one who is holding power is always challenge by other people, if that power is not the spiritual power in term of mindfulness, concentration, insight, faith and diligent; people accept that power, people accept that political power, because they know that such a power is needed for the respect of order, if you disrespect the power then it will be disorder, that is why they accept it. They even revered that kind of power, power of justice, power of order; without justice, without order, they can not be a peace and justice, order is something sacred, that is why we are ready to revered, to venerate that kind of power, but at the same time to revered because it is sacred and to accept because it needed, but they always challenge that power, even if we accept, even if we revered or venerate, but we still challenge because that is inner quality.

If someone is too powerful and someone else who doesn't has power at all, that is why the feeling of most people even if they have to accept the authority, we have to bow in front of that authority, but there is always the tendency to revolve and to challenge, because there is inner quality between men and men, this is

speaking in term of worldly power, but as far as spiritual power is concern, there is no revolve, there is no challenge anymore, because when power as described as love, as wisdom, as freedom from affliction, that kind of power will never be challenge.

We are all motivated by the desire to be happy, as we know that we should need some power in order to be really happy, but what kind of power should we acquire, that is the question; this is a real topic of meditation for everyone.

[bell]

When there is something that you don't like, when something happened in yourself, something happened in your family, in your community that you don't like it, you want to change it right away, you are motivated and tempted to use the little power that available to you, as a father, mother, as a big brother, as a some money; you want to change, that is the moment you have to practice looking deeply to see whether your way of dealing with what is not pleased you is a good way or not, that is spiritual or not.

When you have a disciple that doesn't live or practice the way he or she should practice, that is something is not to his liking, because he always like his disciple to practice the way to be happy, but if it happened that the disciple does not practice the way he or she should do or practice in term of power, if the disciple not practice, they will be tempted to shout, to punish, tempted to use his power as a teacher, of course a teacher always make mistakes especially in the first part of their carrier as a teacher, but the teacher should learn like a parents, like a big brother and sister, we have to learn.

You know that in order to help you disciple, in order to help your son and daughter, you should not over use or abused your power, you should learn the Buddhist way, you should use a kind of power that will not cause suffering, namely the capacity of cutting off anger, ignorant, craving; you should use the power of offering favor, love, forgiveness, you should use the power of wisdom

(insight). Using this kind of power you are safe, you can help you student, you can help you son and daughter without creating suffering to yourself, to him or to her.

As you already see the path, we should devote ourselves to the training, so this kind of power will growth in us, because they are the real spiritual power, they have the capacity of changing, transforming and not bring suffering and despair.

[bell]

*All mistakes are purely done by the transcriber, not the teaching or even the teacher.  
Dedicate to all Dharma friends.*

Transcribed by *Nyanabhadra*

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