

AN APPROACH TO MINDFULNESS AND MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

by Ven. Thich Minh Thanh

ABSTRACT

*Mindfulness is coming up to the spotlight as the leading banner at the first workshop in the conference organized by the UNDV Committee 2019. The paper starts as an attempt to review how mindfulness has ever been thought about in the previous conference of Vesak Day Committee. The review is then widened with a shift to what mindfulness is like for the netizens around the world to enjoy. All this leads to acknowledging that Buddhist mindfulness has been in the process of secularizing, particularly when it is expounded and implemented around the western countries. Professor J. Abraham Vélez de Cea who is concerned about the secularization put forth the issue of whether the processed mindfulness is an adaptation or a distortion and has tried to solve. The paper shares the concern and offer a different view that takes mindfulness in its core to be a nexus that has a remarkable connection or bridge to Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment when it appears as key factor in the third jhana. Mindfulness has also another bridge, which is quite gentle, to leadership, especially elaborated in the book entitled *The Art of Power* by Thích Nhất Hạnh. Last but not the least, the paper seems to be on verge of bringing forth a groundbreaking view. That is about the suggestive bridge between the smile of Thích Nhất Hạnh and the legendary smile of the ancient senior monk Maha Kassapa.*

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The Buddhist technical term “mindful/mindfulness” has become widespread and appeared densely in Buddhist discourses on meditation, theory and practice, deep and in daily life. Needless to say it gets its substantial flourishing in the discourses of Plum Village. That the ICDV put it at the leading position is likely to suggest its importance. This caught my attention, hence the paper is going to be prepared. The first thing I would like to say is that mindfulness should be applied universally and commonly to each and every aspects of Buddhist activities, regardless of traditions, lineages, schools, denominations. The implement of mindfulness is to be pervading and lingering in the atmosphere of the Buddhist world. The theme Mindful Leadership For Sustainable Peace is, therefore, just a selected part of the whole picture of mindfulness. My paper will be attempted at surveying on the three main headings.

1. A REVIEW OF THE TERM “MINDFUL” AND “LEADERSHIP” IN THE COURSE OF PREVIOUS EVENTS OF UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK

Among more than 100 titles of paper, that were submitted to and listed for the five workshops in the conference of the Vesak at Ninh Binh in 2014, there were only 4 papers that discussed mindfulness and no paper about leader or leadership associated with mindfulness.

- i. *The Worldwide Mindfulness Meditation Practice* by Hozan Roshi
- ii. *Mindfulness meditation can heal illnesses* By Hồng Quang
- iii. *Integrating “Mindfulness Practice” to University Level Curriculum: Promoting tolerance and empathy in a multi-cultural and multi faith setting* by Prof. Padmasiri de Silva.
- iv. *Mindfulness for secular purposes: distortion or adaptation of the Buddha’s teachings* by Dr. J. Abraham Vélez de Cea.

The aforementioned silence on the topic about the interplay between mindfulness and leadership is in line with my roughly understanding that there is a bridge between the two. The reason at first blush is that mindfulness has much to do with deep and moment-moment attention to the here and the now. There is

nothing to do with scheduled place to go to or well-set plan to fulfill in the future. It is only the present that matters whereas good leadership has so much to do with steering the events of any kind and any size in the best direction as well calculated before in the past so as to get to the best destination in the future. The leadership clearly is, therefore, involved in the past thinking for what will be done, the present conducting of what is proper and the future results that are expected. Now, Let's have a look at the above four papers.

Hozan Roshi's paper has been giving us some good news about the growth of mindfulness publications, say, books, magazines, DVDs. The years 1998 marked the starting point with 13 publications and the number has been going up continuously through 14 years to the year 2012 with 477 publications. A statistic survey conducted in 2007 told us that over 20 millions of Americans practiced mindfulness. The mindfulness practice would certainly be capable to yield lots of desirable benefits which Hong Quang in turn presented in details, sometimes in neurological parlance, sometimes poetically like "I am coming from birth and death. Sitting on the mountain peak, smiling with the Moon. Getting a job in order to feed and raise a family and to contribute good deeds to society. Mindfulness helps us to complete work more efficiently and create a good team-work spirit with our co-workers."⁽¹⁾

The title "Integrating 'Mindfulness Practice' to University Level Curriculum" given to his paper by Padmasiri de Silva is kind of ambitious, at least in the eye of roughly three fifth or even two third of the Vietnamese population who are Buddhists or in love with Buddhism. Its sub-title is "Promoting Tolerance and Empathy in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-faith setting"⁽²⁾. That is what he quoted from Bangkok Declaration, UN Vesak Day, 2012 "To promote the ethical use of mindfulness in a universally applicable manner, in such fields as healthcare, education, management and community education" in which "To promote the ethical use of mindfulness" can serve as a leading standpoint. There is for me the consistence of

1. daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/sach/vesak2014/ (Unfortunately the address seems to collapse)

2. daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/sach/vesak2014/ws5_01_en__Integrating___Mindfulness_Practice_____932596010.pdf

how to understand mindfulness, whether it was slightly suggested by the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICVD) in 2012 or directly proposed by ICVD in 2019. The issue to be discussed here is the bridge between the two sides – basic sense and ethical senses of mindfulness or more general between basic and applied senses of mindfulness⁽³⁾. It is quite helpful that Padmasiri de Silva has started addressing in a scholastic way a kind of bridge that crosses over two sides, i.e., observational mindfulness and wisdom-oriented mindfulness, saying, “In the Buddhist context mindfulness as *sati* is just moment-moment awareness, knowing what you are doing in the moment, but we also need to use *sati-sampajañña*, as *sampajañña* serves as a bridge between the observational function of mindfulness and the direction towards wisdom. It is this sense of direction which makes way for the coherent continuity of mindfulness.”⁽⁴⁾ He unfolded this kind of applied mindfulness towards the field of morality.

I would like to say, by the way, that I feel interested in the compatibility between the particular focuses of Tibetan studies and Zen tradition in addressing negative emotions, especially when spoken in a colorful parlance, “There are very good works within the Zen and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition on managing emotions. Tibetan studies focus converting and transforming the energy in negative emotions, using the metaphor of the peacock eating poison and transforming this into the resplendent colours of the feathers, while Zen sees a cognitive and hermeneutical role in converting negative emotions to insights”. Silva quotes Wheeler and says, “presence of mind and mindfulness as helping to develop balance and resilience in negotiations, and to become aware of one’s own thinking and emotions in a detached way—recognizing the auto pilot, the first stirrings of irritation, without prematurely judging them as valid or inappropriate, accept their presence and move on, as a traveler on a train takes a passing scene. Do not try to destroy the first stirrings of anger within but see it with the wisdom

3. Or I can put it in more critical terms: Rigid sense and liberalist sense.

4. http://daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/sach/vesak2014/ws5_01_en__Integrating___Mindfulness_Practice_____932596010.pdf

of the Buddha: Irritation emerges, stay for a while and pass away.”⁽⁵⁾ This would help in building up the emotion-controlled temperance in people who are in the field of leadership, suggesting the meaning of mindful leadership.

The paper “Mindfulness for Secular Purposes: Distortion or Adaptation of the Buddha’s Teachings?”⁽⁶⁾ given by J. Abraham Vélez de Cea⁽⁷⁾ satisfies a good extent my quest for understanding mindfulness as applied in secular contexts. It is originally a chapter in “*The Importance of Promoting Buddhist Education*”⁽⁸⁾. On which I get quite a good glimpse at what have been happening in the West in relation with mindfulness. With prudence, J. Abraham Vélez de Cea calls it secular mindfulness, presuming mindfulness to be religious. The reason for its secularization is given: “A secular approach to mindfulness is already spreading all over the western world, benefiting many people from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist backgrounds who otherwise would not be interested in practicing meditation.”⁽⁹⁾ I got further informed that among the prominent pioneers in secularizing mindfulness for the benefit of many westerners are Kabat-Zinn and Scott R. Bishop. What have inspired me more, however, is from Tse-fu Kuan with his book *Mindfulness in Early Buddhism*⁽¹⁰⁾ because it refers to what I have considered to

5. *ibid.*

6. http://daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/sach/vesak2014/ws5_08_en__Mindfulness_for_secular_purposes_400086783.pdf

7. Born in Saragossa, Spain, Dr. J. Abraham Vélez de Cea teaches Buddhism and World Religions at Eastern Kentucky University since 2006. Before joining ECU he taught Buddhist Ethics and Buddhist-Christian Mysticism in the department of theology at Georgetown University. He is active in the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, and the Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflective Group of the American Academy of Religion.

He is interested in peace-building through interfaith dialogue, which he sees as a spiritual practice for everybody, not just scholars and representatives of religious communities. He believes that interreligious education, comparative theology, and interreligious studies are indispensable tools to foster mutual understanding and cooperation among people from diverse faiths. <https://philosophy.eku.edu/people/velez-de-cea>.

8. Thich Nhat Tu and Thich Duc Thien (Eds.), *The Importance of Promoting Buddhist Education*, Vietnam Buddhist University Publications, Phu Nhuan 2014.

9. *ibid.* p. 110.

10. <https://www.bookdepository.com/Mindfulness-Early-Buddhism-Tse-fu-Kuan/9780415437370>. “This book identifies what is meant by sati (smṛti), usually translated as ‘mindfulness’, in early Buddhism, and examines its soteriological functions and its central role in the early Buddhist practice and philosophy. Using textual analysis and criticism, it takes new approaches to the subject through a comparative study of Buddhist texts in Pali, Chinese and Sanskrit. It also furnishes

be important: The ultimate goal of mindfulness for practitioners to aim at, “this book shows that mindfulness is not only limited to the role as a method of insight (*vipassana*) meditation, as presented by many Theravada advocates, but it also has a key role in serenity (*samatha*) meditation. It elucidates how mindfulness functions in the path to liberation from a psychological perspective, that is, how it helps to achieve an optimal cognitive capability and emotional state, and thereby enables one to attain the ultimate religious goal”⁽¹¹⁾. I will come back to elaborate this point further.

Now, I want to render what J. Abraham Vélez de Cea have written on the Mindfulness in Early Buddhism simple and kind of pictorial. Mindfulness can be pictured as having one core in the center and three layers around. The core symbolizes its nature and the layers symbolize its interactions with other aspects of mental activities as prescribed in the Buddhist discourses. The core of mindfulness which is beforehand cultivated to be curious, open, accepting, non-elaborative and nonjudgmental has then the three main functions at most to perform: “(a) observing and noticing each object in the stream of consciousness; (b) recognizing and discriminating among different elements of experience; whether it is a thought, a feeling, or a sensation, etc., (c) investigating the elements of one’s experience and how one experience gives rise to another”⁽¹²⁾. My position is that when mindfulness acts more than the aforementioned three it should be considered to drop out from its core.

I see that the essence of the core, however, should be the surpassing quality awareness of each and every event in the stream of consciousness per se, a kind of supramundane discrimination or indiscrimination at most. It is not easy to say at all. This would be the prerequisite for what I consider to be groundbreaking pass into the realm of enlightenment that was experienced by the Shakyamuni Buddha.

The first layer of mindfulness is when it interacts with what any individual practitioner is experiencing moment after moment.

new perspectives on the ancient teaching by applying the findings in modern psychology”.

11. <https://www.bookdepository.com/Mindfulness-Early-Buddhism-Tse-fu-Kuan/9780415437370>

12. Thich Nhat Tu and Thich Duc Thien (Eds.) op cit, 114.

The highly meditative layer starts with its interaction with bodily experience or the sensations, the states of the mind, or the mental stuff that is perceived. In my view, it is likely that the further the layer is unfolding the farther from the core it is.

The second layer is when mindfulness functions at its interaction with the practice of noble eightfold path where it is called by the terminological phrase “Right Mindfulness”. The noble eightfold path is the Buddhist lifestyle which encompasses all aspects of Buddhist daily practices – ethics, meditation and wisdom. Right mindfulness together with right view and right endeavor would serve in all the three above aspects as supporting power that help driving the practice of the noble eightfold path to the higher fulfillment. The “Discourse Pertaining to the Great Forty” reads, “Whoever makes endeavour for the riddance of wrong view, for the attainment of right view, that is his right endeavour. Mindful, he gets rid of wrong view; mindful, entering on right view, he abides in it. This is his right mindfulness. Thus these three things circle round and follow after right view, that is to say: right view, right endeavour, right mindfulness.”⁽¹³⁾ This type of mindfulness appears practically versatile and kind of universal.

The third layer seems to be furthest from the core of mindfulness. It engages in emotional aspect of Buddhist lifestyle – loving kindness⁽¹⁴⁾. This is where mindfulness associated with emotion has much to do with leadership and the idea of “Mindful Leadership for Sustainable Peace” becomes plausible in Buddhist perspective in general and particularly in the worldwide political arena of today where love, tolerance and mutual trusting become less and less substantial up to a dangerous extent. This is what I will elaborate further when I read Thích Nhất Hạnh for the topic Mindful Leadership. Now, by the way, I want to say that I do appreciate what Abraham Vélez de Cea has talked about the issue: “Distortion or adaptation of the Buddha’s teaching?” where

13. The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, I. B. Horner, O.B.E., M.A. (transl.), The Pali Text Society, Oxford 1996, p. 115.

14. The mettāsutta understands loving-kindness, not as a meditation that has nothing to do with mindfulness, but rather as a particular way of practicing mindfulness... op cit., J. Abraham Vélez de Cea, p. 125.

he puts forth the concerns that the Buddhists should have in relation to the secularization of mindfulness in the West, saying, “It is my sincere belief that Buddhists have reasons to be at least concerned about what many presentations of secular mindfulness do to the Buddha’s teachings and the future of Buddhism in western countries. The fact is that many presentations of secular mindfulness today tend to ignore Buddhist right mindfulness or reduce it to bare attention. Unless Buddhists mobilize to take a more active role in the way mindfulness meditation is being taught by non-Buddhists, the Buddha’s teachings run the risk of getting lost in translation and become utterly irrelevant for those practicing secular mindfulness.”⁽¹⁵⁾

2. A LOOK OF THE TERM “MINDFUL LEADERSHIP” ON THE CYBER WORLD

Now, I want to have a look of mindfulness leadership on the cyber world. The internet nowadays can give us quick and immense amount of information on any subject we may think out and try to explore into. I googled “mindfulness leadership” in December 15, 2018 at 8:32 AM, the results should be stunning: About 37,400,000 results (0.48 seconds). That amount outnumbered the working capacity of any real-life human brain. I have just arbitrarily drawn on the millions some little bits and pay some attention to the three book reviews and nine quotations as an example of some grains of sand from the Sahara desert of information. I will copy, paste them down and do little elaborating.

2.1. *The Mindfulness Edge: How to Rewire Your Brain for Leadership* By Matt Tenney and Tim Gard, PhD was reviewed by over 800 words. To avoid being clumsy and to be to-the-point, I picked up the last paragraph: “Packed with compelling research, helpful tips and exercises, and powerful stories, *The Mindfulness Edge* doesn’t simply open the door for us to become more aware of ourselves, our biases, and our thinking, but also helps uncover the powerful leaders within us.”⁽¹⁶⁾

15. Thich Nhat Tu and Thich Duc Thien (Eds.) op cit.

16. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/book-review-the-mindfulness-edge-how-to-rewire-your-brain->

2.2. *The Mindful Leader: 7 Proven Practices To Transform Your Leadership, Your Organization and Your Life* was given five stars and the following words, “The Mindful Leader is a not-to-be-missed read. Michael Bunting breaks new ground, adding an important dimension to our understanding of leadership and the practice of leading. He offers insights about mindfulness that clearly illustrate how leadership development begins within, and he brings science to mindfulness in a way that offers practical applications for meeting today’s leadership challenges—and for making an extraordinary difference in the world.”⁽¹⁷⁾

2.3. *Mindful leadership effective tools to help you focus and succeed* by Wibo Koole and part of its review says, “This book is full of insights and exercises that teach leaders and leaders-to-be how to practice mindfulness. It shows how mindfulness allows you to become more mentally and physically resilient, more easily able to switch between action and reflection, and better equipped at knowing when to focus on yourself or the world around you. But mindfulness-based leadership doesn’t stop there. By learning to focus, you learn to work with your team more effectively. Nurturing a mindful corporate culture helps you solve problems and build healthy strategies that will benefit you, your colleagues, and your organization.”⁽¹⁸⁾

On flipping over some pages, I can’t help but saying that they seem not to be aware of or deliberately ignore the ultimate religious goal of mindfulness. That is only what I am doubtful about and, of course, might be wrong and I hope so. Anyhow, if it is true then the concern that Abraham Vélez de Cea has about the distortion of the Buddha’s teachings is reasonable.

Now that I turn my eyes to some quotations on the net, at the website: themindfulnessedge.com⁽¹⁹⁾ I can get a lot of quotations

for-leadership/

17. <https://www.mindfulleaderbook.com/>

18. <https://metadata.isbn.nl/88880/mindful-leadership.html>

19. <https://themindfulnessedge.com/mindful-leadership-quotes-practical-and-inspiring-quotes-on-mindful-leadership/>

entitled “50+ Practical and Inspiring Quotes on Mindful Leadership”, I have just arbitrarily picked up the 9 as follows,

i. “A simple mantra for inspiring, effective, mindful leadership: Cultivate peace of mind and go about doing good.”

- Matt Tenney, author of *The Mindfulness Edge*

ii. “It seems to me it would do us all good to act from our heart more often. We’ll be surprised how small acts of attention and kindness can release the energy, enthusiasm, and imagination bottled up in our [over-stressed] minds and bodies.”

- Tim Ryan, congressman for the state of Ohio, author of *A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit*

iii. “Our journey to develop the qualities of mindful leadership calls us to be present in this moment, to be ‘still in the midst of activity’. Or, more accurately in today’s world, in the midst of the chaos that often typifies our lives. As we begin to cultivate a practice to develop the qualities of mindful leadership, we begin to recognize the folly of believing that if we could just move faster, we would eventually catch up.”

- Janice Marturano, founder of the Institute for Mindful Leadership and author of *Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership*

iv. “An anxious mind is an unproductive mind that doesn’t inspire the best in others. A top priority for mindful leaders is cultivating peace of mind.”

- Matt Tenney, author of *The Mindfulness Edge: How to Rewire Your Brain for Leadership and Personal Excellence Without Adding to Your Schedule*

v. “For mindful leaders, cultivating such organizational health requires first and foremost a mastery of organizational conduct—a fluency in nine basic competencies: Eliminate toxicity. Appreciate health. Build trust. Send clear messages. Embrace resistance. Understand blindness. Accept invitations. Heal wounds. Be realistic.”

- Michael Carroll, author of *The Mindful Leader: Ten Principles for Bringing Out the Best in Ourselves and Others*

vi. “Mindfulness is a state of being fully present, aware of oneself and other people, and sensitive to one’s reactions to stressful situations. Leaders who are mindful tend to be more effective in understanding and relating to others, and motivating them toward shared goals. Hence, they become more effective in leadership roles.”

- Bill George, professor of Management Practice, and a Henry B. Arthur Fellow of Ethics, at Harvard Business School, former chairman and CEO of Medtronic, and author of *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*

vii. “How we drink coffee and walk to the bathroom has an impact on the mind and how we lead. Please don’t overlook these moments.”

- Matt Tenney, author of *The Mindfulness Edge: How to Rewire Your Brain for Leadership and Personal Excellence Without Adding to Your Schedule*

viii. “Authentic leaders never let their organizations lose sight of a shared sense of purpose and common values.”

- Bill George, professor of Management Practice, and a Henry B. Arthur Fellow of Ethics, at Harvard Business School, former chairman and CEO of Medtronic, and author of *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*

ix. “To be most productive, we should do less, not more. Doing less helps us be clearer on what’s important and do those things well.”

- Matt Tenney, author of *The Mindfulness Edge: How to Rewire Your Brain for Leadership and Personal Excellence Without Adding to Your Schedule*

It should be reminded that in Buddhist ideology there are a set of three aspects of cultivation and an orientation for practitioners to keep constantly in mind. All and every activities including exerting leadership that a practitioner may perform should be grounded in ethics, meditation and wisdom. Those activities regardless

of whatever kind they can be should be oriented toward ethics, meditation and wisdom as purpose. In short, they are motive and purpose simultaneously. Good news is that almost all and every things in Buddhist views is intrinsically possible to be means for a practitioner to travel skillfully and happily from the ocean of suffering to the shore of liberation. The three book reviews and nine mindfulness quotes as aforementioned should be shed light on and assessed by the criteria of the three aspects of cultivation and the single orientation.

3. MINDFUL LEADERSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF THÍCH NHẤT HẠNH'S INSIGHTS

Now, I would like to shift to the issue of mindfulness as it is addressed in *The Art of Power* (TAOP) by Thích Nhất Hạnh whom I regard to be among the greatest authorities in terms of a creative and feasible approach to mindfulness. With regard to the foundations of true power inclusive of true power in leadership, Buddhist tradition will discuss the following set of five spiritual powers, i.e., faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration, and insight. In addition to the textbook-like set of five, TAOP initially speaks about the set of three virtues that a true leader should cultivate, i.e., the virtue of cutting off, the virtue of loving, and the virtue of insight, saying, "If you lead with the three virtues of cutting off, offering love, and cultivating insight, you have real authority. Simply having the title of leader is not enough. Titles do not give true power. When you practice mindfulness well and you radiate joy, stability, and peace, you acquire a much deeper authority. When you speak, people listen to you, not because they have to but because you are fresh, serene, and wise. A good leader is one who exercises only this kind of authority. She doesn't strive for it or want to use it, but it comes naturally. She inspires people by her way of living, and people listen to her because of her authenticity."⁽²⁰⁾

On reading the two aforementioned sets of cultivation I feel that TAOP does not discuss the leadership in terms of how to win the game of power or what kind of tactic or strategic measures should be made to get leverage or advantage in economic or political

20. Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Art of Power" Harper Collins Publishers, New York 2007, p. 34.

battles. It discusses instead the qualities of the leaders. The set of five spiritual powers suggests that besides the scholastic approach or scrupulously scrutinizing the Buddhist literature in the ancient languages such as Pali, Sanskrit or in the translation language such as Chinese, Tibetan, in order to get what mindfulness precisely is, there is a much more comprehensive approach that begins with faith, develops through diligence, mindfulness, concentration, and ultimately comes up with insight. The set of three virtues, i.e., cutting off, offering love and cultivating insight, are about the charismatic dispositions that are nourished by the five spiritual powers and manifested outwardly in real-life activities of the high quality leaders. It should be deeply believed that when the leaders are well equipped with the unattachment, loving kindness and insight they would not prioritize their positions and whatever theirs may be but they would be for the benefit of many and the well-faring of many. The following is a set of selected quotes from the TAOP.

- Mindfulness is being fully present in the here and now, being in touch with what is going on inside us and around us. TAOP, p3.

- Mindfulness is the energy of being aware of what is happening in the present moment. When we have the energy of mindfulness in us, we are fully present, we are fully alive, and we live deeply every moment of our daily life. Whether you are cooking, or washing, or cleaning, or sitting, or eating, it is a time for you to generate the energy of mindfulness. And the energy of mindfulness helps you know what you should do and what you should not do. It helps you avoid difficulties and mistakes, it protects you and shines light on all your daily activities. TAOP, p. 22.

- There may be suffering, fear, or anxiety in our family. Mindfulness helps US recognize this suffering, and embrace and transform it. You can say to your loved ones, "I'm here for you. Let's embrace the pain together and transform it." Mindfulness is the capacity of being there, fully present. When you love someone, the most precious gift you can give your loved one is your true presence. You can't buy the ability to bring joy and transform suffering. TAOP, p. 46.

- One of the core practices of mindfulness is to take care of our painful emotions. Many of us run away from ourselves, from our

pain. Usually when we have pain, we don't want to face it because we don't know how to take care of it. TAOP, p. 50.

- Mindfulness is an energy that can hold the suffering, the anger, the despair, if you know how to hold your suffering long enough, you get relief. TAOP, p. 22-3.

- If we lose this power of mindfulness, we lose everything. Without mindfulness, we make and spend our money in ways that destroy us and other people. We use our fame in such a way that we destroy ourselves and others. We use our military strength to destroy ourselves and other people. TAOP, p. 23.

- Our family and professional lives will be poisoned if we don't know how to create and maintain a mindful home and a mindful workplace. TAOP, p. 42.

- Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. You cannot concentrate on or become mindful of nothing. So to practice mindfulness you need an object. When you focus your attention on your breath, your breathing is the object of your mindfulness and concentration. When you generate the energy of mindfulness, it will embrace the object of your attention and keep it alive in your mind. TAOP, p. 177-8.

- Mindfulness is the energy of attention. It is the capacity in each of us to be present one hundred percent to what is happening within and around us. It is the miracle that allows us to become fully alive in each moment. It is the essential basis for healing and transforming ourselves and creating more harmony in our family, our work life, and our society. TAOP, p. 42.

With the extremely practical and feasible language, TAOP give out another picture of what mindfulness is. Many might take the above picture of mindfulness to be less than a Buddhist version of it, even to be kind of simplified or cut-short version because it has little to do with four establishments of mindfulness and it says nothing about right mindfulness in the noble eightfold path, whereas I don't. Why? Because I feel that it is kind of to-the-point approach to the quintessence or the core of mindfulness. Moreover, it reflects a real-life example which has already been set up by the practitioners

at Plump Village and still in play in line with what the Buddhists should do as proposed by Abraham Vélez de Cea, “Ideally, all Buddhists involved in teaching mindfulness meditation should be able to adopt a secular or a Buddhist approach depending on their circumstances and the background of their audiences. Only those with training in both Buddhist and secular mindfulness will be able to differentiate between the two and teach mindfulness in a way that neither clashes with non-Buddhist sensibilities nor trivializes the Buddha’s teachings and renders them irrelevant in the long term.”⁽²¹⁾ What missed here though is that the core of mindfulness at its best is in an extremely short distance to the enlightenment that the Shakyamuni Buddha ever got. For me as a practitioner, this kind of attainment of the ultimate religious goal in relation with mindfulness as its prerequisite factor is what I feel interested in and would be inspiring true practitioners with highest achievement in mind. How short the distance is can be gleaned from the description of the third jhana or the third meditation in the Bhayabheravasutta that reads, “and I experienced in my person that joy of which the Aryans say: ‘Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful,’ and I entered into and abided in the third meditation.”⁽²²⁾ The process is that the third meditation with mindfulness in its core as the key factor is one step from the fourth meditation and then the realm of enlightenment.

Now that, in brief, what I can say about the bridge between mindfulness and leadership is that mindfulness helps building up the elevated qualities of the leaders in regards with ethics, concentration and insight. The dispositions of mindful leaders are constantly tending to letting go, offering love and cultivating insight. She will exert power of all and every kind for the benefit of the many, for the well-faring of the many, visible and invisible, in the present or in the future. All and every of her acts of body, speech, and mind, her acts of performing the power out of her position in the office or along her personal life would be wholesome and

21. http://daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/sach/vesak2014/ws5_08_en__Mindfulness_for_secular_purposes_400086783.pdf

22. The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, I. B. Horner, O.B.E., M.A. (transl.), The Pali Text Society, Oxford 1995, p. 27.

imbued with loving-kindness and wisdom. Sustainable peace at her home, at work and even in the wider scope is, without any bit of doubt, naturally incurred. In his Vietnamese book entitled *Cho Đất Nước Mở Ra* (*For the Country to Open*), Thích Nhất Hạnh says,

“Khi ta có khả năng mang lại sự bình yên trong thân và trong tâm rồi thì ta có thể giúp những người trong gia đình, trong tập đoàn, trong xã hội. Hòa bình an lạc luôn luôn bắt đầu bằng tự thân, “peace begins with yourself”. Chúng ta đừng đòi hỏi người kia phải thế này, phải thế kia. Hãy bắt đầu bằng chính mình, bằng một hơi thở, bằng một nụ cười, bằng một bước chân, bằng một lời nói, bằng một cử chỉ hòa bình, an lạc.”⁽²³⁾

The following is my translation: “When we are able to bring about the peace in our body and mind, we can help other members in our family, at work, and in society. “Peace begins with yourself”. We should not request other people to be like this or like that. Let’s begin with ourselves, with a breath, a smile, a footstep, a spoken word, or with a peaceful and pleasant gesture.” It should be noted that in the ancient time, a legendary smile delivered by the senior monk Maha Kassapa has ever initiated a whole course of powerful and long history of a meditation tradition named Patriarchal Meditation, if you would. The smile of Thich Nhat Hanh, which in many cases falls into being enlisted among other ethical or meditative conducts though, is genetic in nature and appears in many other forms, say, a breath, a spoken word, a footstep, and a peaceful and pleasant gesture. It seems that the cultivation process starts at a deliberate and purposeful smile that ultimately comes up being a highest-quality smile which is then intuitive and natural.

23. Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Cho Đất Nước Mở Ra* (*For the Country to Open*), Vietnam 2007, p. 190.

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