

An esoteric psychology profile on Zen Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh

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*“Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile,
but sometimes your smile is the source of your joy”*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

1. Biography



Figure 1: Zen Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh was born in Thua Thien Hue, central of Vietnam on October 11, 1926 with his born name Nguyen Xuan Bao. His spiritual journey began at the age of seven when he first saw a picture of the Buddha and then he felt a deep calling of being a monk. At the age of sixteen, he entered Tu Hieu Temple, in Hue city, as a novice monk and became a student of Vietnamese Zen master Thanh Quy Chan That. The family name “Thich” was used by many Vietnamese monks as the religious order of Guatada Buddha. In 1949, he was officially recognized as a Zen master and spiritual leader of Tu Hieu Temple.

At his very young age, he was actively engaged in the movement to renew Vietnamese Buddhism. In Vietnam War, his concern had always been how to ease the pain that Vietnamese people were suffering under the bombings and turmoil. He is the first one to mention the concept “engaged Buddhism” in his book *“Vietnam: Lotus in a sea of fire”*. In 1956, he became the editor-in-chief of Vietnamese United Buddhist Church. In 1960, he founded the *School of Youth for Social Services* – SYSS, an organization which helped people rebuild villages and schools and dispensaries damaged by bombs in war. Thich Nhat Hanh also founded the Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, La Boi publishing House, and an influential peace activist magazine.

He has come to the US many times to research and address at Princeton University and teach Buddhism at Colombia University. The initial purpose of his travels was to call for an end to hostilities in Vietnam and then to teach and bring Buddhism closer to Western countries. His work in the 1960s had made Martin Luther King, Jr. to take notice and the result was that he had spoken out against Vietnam War for the first time and then nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He was a lecturer and researcher in Buddhism at the University of Sorbonne, Paris in the early 1970s. In 1975, he established the Sweet Potato community near Paris, and in 1982 they moved to a much larger site in the south west of France, soon to be known as “Plum Village”, which now has over 8,000 visitors each year to come and learn Buddhism and practice “the art of mindful living”.

He was also the founder of the 'Order of Interbeing' and established many Zen monasteries all around the world to teach people about Buddhism, mindfulness and living peace.

At the age of 88, Thich Nhat Hanh is now one of the most influenced spiritual leaders in the world. He is often called *Thay* (a Vietnamese word meaning teacher), a sincere and dear way of addressing by his students. Now he continues to travel and spread the message of peace and brotherhood worldwide and he also write books, poems and commentaries on ancient Buddhist texts. He has published over 100 titles many of which have been widely known such as *Living Buddha, living Christ, Peace is Every Step, The Miracle of Mindfulness, The Art of Power, True Love and Anger*. He has been invited to lead events for US Congressmen and -women, and in the UK, Ireland, India and Thailand. He has also taken part in activities of calling for peace, non-violence and global warming, as well as the World Parliament of Religions in Melbourne. In 2013, he led high-profile mindfulness events at Google, The World Bank and the Harvard School of Medicine.

Video of his talks at some organizations:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PewRDHeh3oY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLi6ZuRpsvo>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKHW0XpY6eQ>

2. Where you would place the person upon the Path:

Looking at Thich Nhat Hanh's life and what he has done, I believe that he is an initiate, whose life is to serve the community.

Since his starting journey to spirituality, he was one of the pioneers to renew the Vietnamese Buddhism. In Vietnam War, although many monks chose to live a peaceful life and sat to meditate in temples, he chose to act as non-violent activist to call for an end to hostilities in Vietnam. In war, people lived in negativity and were hungry for spirituality – a belief to lean on so many had come to Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh had

helped them how to find a point to lean on within themselves, not from outside. He also came to Western countries such as France, America many times to call for the support of people who love peace to raise their voice against Vietnam War.

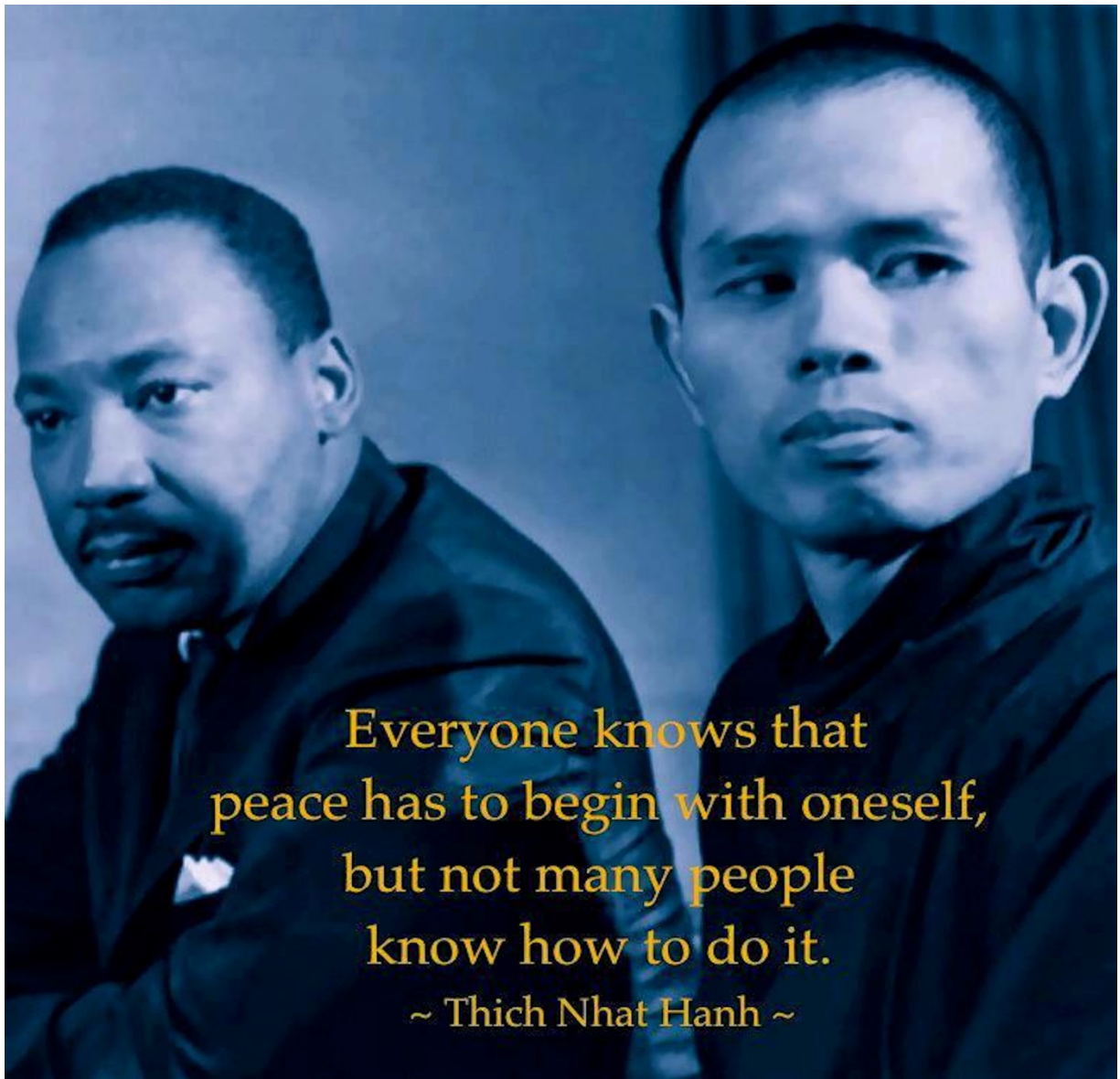


Figure 2: Thich Nhat Hanh met Martin Luther King

Thich Nhat Hanh has also been a pioneer to bring Buddhism to Western countries. He has founded six monasteries and many other practice centres in America and Europe, one of

which has been very well-known is Plum Village in France. He has also established over 1,000 local mindfulness practice communities.

During a 39-year-period of exile, he continued to act for peace and spread the message of the Buddha worldwide. He has been addressing many speeches about the Buddhist teachings in many countries, organizations and universities. He was a Buddhism lecturer and researcher of Princeton University, Colombia University and University of Sorbonne.

He has also founded the “Order of Interbeing” or “Tiep Hien” based on the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, a distillation of the Bodhisattva (Enlightened Being) teachings of Mahayana Buddhism to emphasize the Four Spirits: non-attachment from views, direct experimentation on the nature of interdependent origination through meditation, appropriateness, and skilful means. He is also the one to bring the concept “[Engaged Buddhism](#)” into his teachings. His language and teachings are very close and easy to understand. His doctrine is for everyone who would love to find peace and wants to live at-one-ment whether you are Buddhist or not.

Thich Nhat Hanh is also a poet, a writer who has written over 100 titles on meditation, poems, mindfulness, and commentaries on ancient Buddhist texts.

Thich Nhat Hanh has been listed as one of 20 most spiritually influential living people 2014 by [Watkins Book](#)

3. A rayology profile of the person

a. Physical – etheric ray: Ray 7

Looking at his physical body, we can see that he’s got a thin frame. As a Zen master, he acts with quietness and stillness, which can be shown in [his motion](#).

[As he is walking, it looks like he is sliding.](#)

He always wears the brown clothes, which are popular clothing of Vietnamese monks. His activities are well-ordered and he often **organises thoughts before speaking**; In every speech or teaching, we usually see that sequential steps are taken such as: ringing the bell, breathing and then asking or delivering speeches. **Here** is a talk of the Summer Opening Retreat in 2012 which can show his magical processes.

b. Emotional ray: Ray 6

The energy of this ray is presented in higher aspiration and idealism in him. Since he first saw a picture of the Buddha when he was a child, he has had the idea of becoming someone like the Buddha. Looking at his life, we can see now he continues initiating that ideal and spreading the teachings of the Buddha.

He has devoted his whole life to act for peace, non-violence and teach Buddhism, not for his own selfish interests but for a great extroverting factor, which leads him along the way of service.

c. Mental ray: Ray 1

When I listen to his teachings, especially in Vietnamese, I see his way of expressing is very straightforward and one-pointed. When his students ask him questions, he always requires them to make clear and short questions. He often advises his students to ask realistic questions which can be useful and applicable in their daily lives, not theoretical ones. I feel his tongue when teaching especially in Vietnamese sometimes sounds strict and even outspoken.

Some videos about Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings & conversations:

Teaching:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKOrgkETdB4>

Q&A:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kegJBzR2-yw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmjZhbv9Xhk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTAWeWDTbFw>

Interview with Ram Dass:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsnUonUZBuY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edOW5hvB8hs>

d. Personality Ray: Ray 4

Thich Nhat Hanh is also a poet, writer who has created many poems, Buddhist stories, books and commentaries on Buddhist text. He is also famous for his calligraphy and his composing parallel sentences and applying this Eastern art into other Western languages such as English or French. From my own view point, these show the traits of the fourth ray, which is a ray of art, beauty, and harmony bringing down intuitions into artistic form.

We can also see the turning conflict into harmony through what he has done. He acted as a non-violent activist who called for an end in Vietnam War raising the voice of people who love peace around the world. He has also been one of the pioneers who brought Buddhism closer to Western countries. He is as an ambassador who helps to establish the integration of the cultures of East and West.

Non-Duality

By Thich Nhat Hanh

*The bell tolls at four in the morning.
I stand by the window,
barefoot on the cool floor.
The garden is still dark.
I wait for the mountains and rivers to reclaim their shapes.*

*There is no light in the deepest hours of the night.
Yet, I know you are there
in the depth of the night,
the immeasurable world of the mind.
You, the known, have been there
ever since the knower has been.*

*The dawn will come soon,
and you will see
that you and the rosy horizon
are within my two eyes.
It is for me that the horizon is rosy
and the sky blue.*

*Looking at your image in the clear stream,
you answer the question by your very presence.
Life is humming the song of the non-dual marvel.
I suddenly find myself smiling
in the presence of this immaculate night.
I know because I am here that you are there,
and your being has returned to show itself
in the wonder of tonight's smile.*

*In the quiet stream,
I swim gently.
The murmur of the water lulls my heart.
A wave serves as a pillow
I look up and see
a white cloud against the blue sky,
the sound of Autumn leaves,
the fragrance of hay-
each one a sign of eternity.
A bright star helps me find my way back to myself.*

*I know because you are there that I am here.
The stretching arm of cognition
in a lightning flash,
joining together a million eons of distance,
joining together birth and death,
joining together the known and the knower.*

*In the depth of the night,
as in the immeasurable realm of consciousness,
the garden of life and I
remain each other's objects.
The flower of being is singing the song of emptiness.*

*The night is still immaculate,
but sounds and images from you*

*have returned and fill the pure night.
I feel their presence.
By the window, with my bare feet on the cool floor,
I know I am here
for you to be.*

This poem is from "*Call Me By My True Names*" The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh.



Figure 3: A Calligraphy of Thay

e. *Soul ray: Ray 2*

Thich Nhat Hanh has considerable sensitivity which can be seen in his activities to the society. He has been a spiritual leader and a teacher for over 60 years. He has devoted his life to mindfulness meditation helping people to be passionately present in the here and now; and also built a thriving community of over 600 monks and nuns worldwide, who, together with his tens of thousands of lay students, apply his teachings on mindfulness, peace-making and community-building in schools, workplaces, businesses – and even prisons – throughout the world. “My

determination to build the beloved community continues always". He once said on an interview with Oprah Winfrey.

The Buddhism teaches about compassion and non-violence and as being a peace warrior, he believes the conflict should be solved non-violently. Therefore, his way of opposing wars and conflicts has always been calling for peace through non-violent actions.

He has always longed for the wisdom and truth and being in love and peace with all. *"Being content and peaceful...This is my practice and my training to live every moment, dwell peacefully in the present moment and respond to events with compassion"*. *"Anything can make us laugh...Being in the here and now...enjoying every minute of life. If you ask our young monastics, you will find down. We laugh and smile a lot in our community"*. He said. These are the featured traits of the 2nd ray soul.

4. The Active Chakra or set of Chakras.

- a. The most active chakras of Thich Nhat Hanh are the heart and head chakra
- b. As illustrated in point 2, Thich Nhat Hanh is an initiate and his work to the society can show us the impersonal love to a big community, which is the unconditional love and wisdom for the higher purposes, not for individual's lower demands.

The activity of the heart centre never demonstrates in connection with individuals. This is a basic fact. What devastates most disciples is the solar plexus ability (when purified [114] and consecrated) to identify itself with individuals. **The heart centre cannot react, except under group impetus, group happiness or unhappiness, and other group relations. [DINA II, p. 114]**

An initiate also focuses on the crown centre which is a synthetic head center and the sum total of all the other centers. I think the person with that fully active crown

chakra will have monism view or inclusive perspective about spirituality. Although he is a Buddhist monk, his teachings is not only for Buddhist but also for everyone with different believes and religions. There is inclusiveness and open mind in his teachings and writings which have no conflict with other religions.

“It is safer to approach God through the Holy Spirit than through theology. Discussing God is not the best use of our energy...If we touch the Holy Spirit, we touch God not as a concept but as a living reality. Reality is free from all notions.... It is our duty to transcend words and concepts to be able to encounter reality...When we see someone overflowing with love and understanding, someone who is keenly aware of what is going on, we know that they are very close to the Buddha and to Jesus Christ”.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

*“In **Living Buddha, Living Christ**, Thich Nhat Hanh expresses deep respect and appreciation for many elements of Christian tradition - not only for the teachings of Jesus but even for the concept of the Trinity and the possibilities for experiencing the love and compassion that many Christians and certain Christian communities offer. Fortunately for his readers, however, Thich Nhat Hanh does not take the easy way out of ecumenical discussion by ignoring disagreement. He also points out elements of Christian tradition that foster religious intolerance and have led to religious hatred”.*

- Elaine Pagels

- c. The 2nd ray (also the soul ray) flows through his heart chakra while the 1st ray (mental ray) goes into his head centre.

The 2nd ray brings the love to the whole and wisdom for truth in his spiritual journey and services to the community. The strong will of a peace warrior and in his thought or strict teachings to students shall show the 1st ray energy.

- d. As pointed out in part b, his active chakras are heart and head centers and through his work and services, we can see that they all have gained ascendancy in his life.

5. In summary

- a. I hypothesise that Thich Nhat Hanh's status is initiate
- b. I hypothesise that Thich Nhat Hanh's rays are: 7 with physical-etheric body, 6 with emotional body, 1 with mental body, 4 with personality body and 2 with the soul ray.

The ray which he most ably demonstrated is ray 2 - for instance, he is a spiritual leader and a teacher who has built beloved communities helping people to be passionately present in the here and now; the most active chakra is the heart centre where the 2nd ray energy flows strongly into.

- c. His Sun Sign is Libra. The negatives he needed to overcome were procrastination and imbalance. He might demonstrate these traits when he was a child before treading into spirituality and in early days of being a novice monk. He first saw the vision of being a monk when he was 7 but only when he was 16, he started living a life of a Buddhist monk. Positives to develop are balancing and the active intelligence that the 3rd ray energy flows into. He demonstrated these traits when he acted to achieve his goals in his service life in struggling for calling for peace, building community to practice mindfulness meditation and his teachings.
- d. It is not easy to learn about the rays or esoteric psychology of my own but it is even more difficult to study about the other person. For me, this long DHY paper is not only a final paper to sum up my first year at school but also a journey to find my true self again. It has helped me to understand and truthfully evaluate myself with an unbiased outlook.

The last one year has a great impact on my whole life as it marked my most major shift to tread into spiritual way. I knew almost nothing about spirituality when I first entered Morya Federation but now I can partly know how far I have to go on this beautiful journey. I have learnt to be more grateful for this life and every

experience that comes to me even if it could be considered being hard in its forms. There are so many things to learn and understand that sometimes they make me feel this life in incarnation is so short and I need to do something meaningful not to waste it. I would like to send my most sincere thank-you to all of you who have travelled with me on this way.

With Light and Love and Power,

Ho Kim Thuan

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