

Discussion Questions

Fragrant Palm Leaves

by Thích Nhất Hạnh

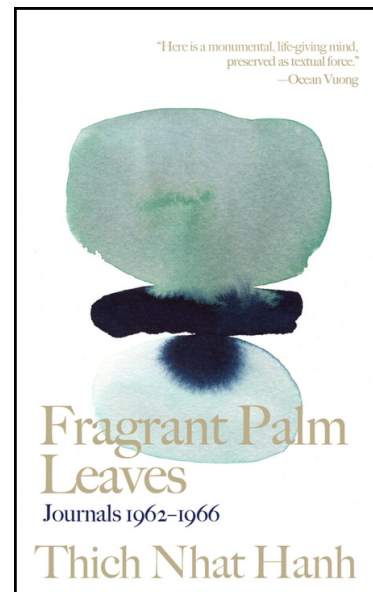
The first set of journals were written in the US in 1962 and 1963 while Thích Nhất Hạnh (Thầy) was 35-36 years old. He writes about his experiences and friends in New York and New Jersey as well as the community in Vietnam, Phương Bối (Fragrant Palm Leaves), established in 1957.

The second set of journals were written in Vietnam from 1964 to 1966 while Thầy was 37-39 years old. Phương Bối had been abandoned for several years by this time. He discusses the work of the School of Youth for Social Service (SYSS) in Vietnam, formally founded in 1965.

1. What was one quote or excerpt that really stood out to you? (Take turns sharing if you have more than one!)
2. Thầy writes about his love and joy for Phương Bối, his true home, and his longing and suffering after Phương Bối was abandoned. How did you feel reading these reflections?
3. Thầy says “My training as a Buddhist novice consisted of one small book, *Gathas for Daily Life*.” What is your experience practicing with gathas?
4. Has reading Thầy’s journals provided new insight into this period of time in Vietnam?
5. How does reading about Thầy’s earlier experiences and aspirations impact your understanding of his teachings?



Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh is a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist, revered around the world for his pioneering teachings on mindfulness, global ethics, and peace. Over seven decades of teaching, he published more than 100 books. Exiled from Vietnam in 1966 for promoting peace, his teachings on Buddhism as a path to social and political transformation are responsible for bringing the mindfulness movement to Western culture. He established the international Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism. He passed away in 2022 at the age of 95 at his root temple, Từ Hiếu, in Huế, Vietnam.



Regarded by many as Thích Nhất Hạnh’s most personally revealing and endearing book, these journals chronicle the first-hand experiences of the Zen master as a young man in both the United States and Vietnam, just as his home country is plunged into war.