

# TRANSFORMATION AND HEALING

## Thich Nhat Hanh

### Chapter Two Summary of the Sutra

*The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* is fundamental to the teaching of meditation practice. The terms ekayana, meaning "one path" in the Pali version, and yu ru dao, meaning "one entrance way" or "one way in" in the Chinese versions, both signify "the one way to practice." Ekayana is translated in our Version One as "a most wonderful way to help living beings." This term, used by the Buddha to describe the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, gives us an idea of the great importance this practice held in the Buddha's teachings during his lifetime. These teachings have since spread throughout the world, and the foundation of these teachings remains the practice of mindful observation. The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness has been studied, practiced, and handed down with special care from generation to generation for 2,500 years.

The four methods of mindfulness described in the sutra are:

- (1) mindfulness of the body,
- (2) mindfulness of the feelings,
- (3) mindfulness of the mind, and
- (4) mindfulness of the objects of the mind (Sanskrit: dharmas).

In the Establishment known as the body, the practitioner is fully aware of the breath, the positions of the body, the actions of the body, the various parts of the body, the four elements which comprise the body, and the decomposition of the body as a corpse.

In the Establishment known as the feelings, the practitioner is fully aware of pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings as they arise, endure, and disappear. He is aware of feelings which have a psychological basis and feelings which have a physiological basis.

In the Establishment known as the mind, the practitioner is fully aware of states of mind such as desire, hatred, confusion, concentration, dispersion, internal formations, and liberation.

In the Establishment known as the objects of mind, the practitioner is fully aware of the Five Aggregates which comprise a person—form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness; the sense organs and their objects, the factors which can obstruct understanding and liberation, the factors which can lead to Awakening, and the Four Noble Truths concerning suffering and the release from suffering.