



The Blooming of the Offering Within You, by Thich Nhat Hanh

A poem is a flower you offer to people. A compassionate look, a smile, an act filled with loving-kindness is also a flower that blooms on the tree of mindfulness and concentration. Even though you don't think about the poem while cooking lunch for your family, the poem is being written. When I write a short story, a novel, or a play, it may take one week or several weeks to finish. But the story or the novel is always there. [...] You cannot just sit there and write the story or the novel. You have to do other things as well. You drink tea, cook breakfast, wash your clothes, water the vegetables. The time spent doing these things is extremely important. You have to do them well. You have to put one hundred percent of yourself into the act of cooking, watering the vegetable garden, of dish washing. You must enjoy what you are doing, and you do it deeply. This is very important for your story, your letter, or anything else that you want to produce. Enlightenment is not separate from washing dishes or growing lettuce. To learn how to live each moment of our daily life in deep mindfulness and concentration is the practice. The conception and unfolding of a piece of art take place exactly in these moments of our daily life. The time when you begin to write down the music or the poems is only the time of delivering the baby. The baby has to be in you already in order for you to deliver it. But if the baby is not in you, even if you sit for hours and hours at your desk, there's nothing to deliver, and you cannot produce anything. Your insight, your compassion, and your ability to write in a way that will move the other person's heart are flowers that bloom on our tree of practice. We should make good use of every moment of our daily life in order to allow this insight and compassion to bloom. --Thich Nhat Hanh