

Metaphor of NATURE in Zen Buddhism by Thích Nhất Hạnh: A Case Study of PLANT Metaphor

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Abstract

Evidence of metaphorical use can be found in religious discourse including Zen Buddhism, which deeply respects nature (Suzuki, 2015). To date, however, little empirical research has been conducted to support the claim that Zen is closely associated with nature. The present study aims to address this research gap by investigating the use of metaphorical expressions related to nature in the literary work of Thích Nhất Hạnh (1926-), one of the most influential Zen Buddhist monks whose works possess strong appeal to international audiences. The study is corpus-based consisting of 392 metaphorical expressions related to PLANT (i.e., PLANT METAPHOR). The corpus was constructed from seven best-sellers on Zen Buddhism by Hạnh, and the metaphorical expressions were identified using the Metaphorical Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen, 2010). The findings show different parts of the PLANT being used to represent abstract concepts such as religions, emotions, and virtues. This study elucidates how Hạnh artistically employed the nature of PLANT to represent various Zen concepts in his didactic use of metaphor.

Keywords: Thích Nhất Hạnh, metaphor, NATURE, PLANT, MIPVU, Zen

Introduction

Metaphor has “an extraordinarily powerful influence on our perception and understanding of the world ... the air of the language we breathe is infused with metaphor. We identify, characterize, assimilate, make sense of things by metaphor” (Unwin, 2019, p. 4). Along the same line, Larson (2011, pp. 4-6) claims that “metaphor does not only allow us to understand one thing in terms of another, but also to think of an abstraction in terms of something more concrete.” Metaphors seem to be pervasive. They appear in many fields, not only in literature, but also in science, education, medicine, economics, politics, art, architecture, and religion (Gibbs, 2008; Unwin, 2019). Among them, religious discourse is one of the fields where metaphor is predominant (Charteris-Black, 2004; Chiengchaovai, 2013; Keshvari & Eslamieh, 2017; Lu & Chiang, 2007; Neary, 2017; Obpat, 2009; Rajandran, 2017; Silvestre-López & Navarro, 2017; Soskice, 1985). Many scholars such as Soskice (1985), Charteris-Black (2004), and Neary (2017) confirm an extensive use of metaphors in the Bible which serve as a powerful tool by which the unknown (i.e., God) is conceptualized in terms of what is already known (e.g., fisherman, light).

In this study, the metaphors of NATURE in Thích Nhất Hạnh's books on Zen Buddhism were explored. Nature is intentionally selected for this study due to the claim that Zen is in close association with it. However, little literature has been conducted by researchers illustrating such connection. Moreover, very little study has been undertaken from the perspective of cognitive linguistics (with the exception of Lu & Chiang, 2007; Silvestre-López & Navarro, 2017). Taking a cognitive linguistic perspective, we can discover how religious teachings are conceptualized systematically and are metaphorically represented in the mind. Thus, the present study aims to examine the use of PLANT METAPHOR in the seven selected books by Thích Nhất Hạnh (henceforth referred to as Hạnh).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is one of the primary approaches in the study of metaphor. It was first introduced in 1980 by Lakoff and Johnson who proposed that metaphor is a basic mental operation by which humans understand the world through mapping from known domains to unknown domains, adding that some conceptualizations are metaphorically structured in the mind (Lakoff, 1993), or "metaphor as thought" (Deignan, 2005). Metaphor is a process of mapping between two different conceptual domains: source domain (SD) and target domain (TD). The TD is what one tries to understand through metaphors while the SD is what one draws upon to create the metaphorical expressions (Kövecses, 2010; Simpson, 2014). Conceptual metaphors are normally written in capital letters, such as TIME IS MONEY.

Based on CMT, metaphorical expressions are linguistic metaphors or surface manifestations of underlying conceptual relationship, for example, "Don't waste your time" or "I have spent a lot of time doing homework." The verbs "waste" and "spend" are often used with money, but in these utterances they are used with time. Thus, we can assume that time is being compared with money. It is clear that there is a correspondence or a mapping between the SDs and the TDs. TIME is the TD which is the concept being described while MONEY is the SD or the representation of the abstract TD. CMT will be used as the main framework of this study.

Metaphor and Religion

CMT can be used as a framework to understand religious teachings which are replete with abstract and complex concepts. Conceptual metaphor helps structure basic experience and religious belief by expressing abstract concepts through the SD which is often more concrete. There have been a number of studies on metaphor in religious discourse. Among them, Soskice (1985) was one of the pioneers who stressed the important role of metaphor in creating new perspectives, contributing to the understanding of metaphor as a tool able to unveil views which have not been previously available. Soskice claimed that metaphor is pervasively used in religious discourse due to its evocative and cognitive functions.

The predominance of metaphors is recorded across religions. For example, Charteris-Black's (2004) corpus linguistic investigation on Christianity and Islam revealed varying uses of metaphors. He found numerous SDs related to the concepts in Christianity, for example, ANIMALS, CONFLICT, PLANTS, LIGHT, BUILDING, FOOD & DRINK, BODY, and JOURNEYS. As for the Koran, he discovered four most productive SDs: JOURNEYS,

WEATHER, FIRE & LIGHT, and PLANTS. Moreover, Neary's (2017) examination of the metaphorical use in Hinduism and Christianity in Gandhi's (1940) English translation of his autobiography revealed that the single most frequently used SD was NATURE, especially PLANT, along with FOOD/DRINK, BODY, and WAR. The conceptual metaphors derived from different metaphorical expressions were: MORALITY IS A PLANT, EMOTIONS ARE PLANTS, and CHARACTER TRAITS ARE PLANTS. As for Buddhism, Obpat (2009) analyzed metaphors related to LIFE in 60 dharma books written by famous Buddhist monks. Fifteen concepts regarding LIFE were abstracted, for instance, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS A TREE, LIFE IS A CONTAINER, and LIFE IS AN IMPERMANENT THING. Through their abundance in religious discourse, metaphor appears to be one of the means by which abstract concepts and ineffable spiritual experience are made intelligible to lay people (Kang, 2018). These studies demonstrated the significance of metaphor in religious discourse.

Buddhism, Zen, and Nature

Buddhist philosophy emphasizes themes of compassion along with awareness, attitudes, and actions which should do no harm to any life on earth (i.e., nature). Humans should help conserve and not exploit nature (Kabilsingh, 1987; Nash, 1987). Buddhādasā (1906-1993), a famous and influential Thai ascetic-philosopher of the 20th century, identifies nature with Buddhist teaching or dhamma. It is claimed that "being attuned to the lessons of nature is tantamount to at-one-ment (in harmony) with the *dhamma*" (translation by Swearer, 1997, p. 25). Buddhādasā (1991) furthers this by mentioning that nature teaches the lessons of self-forgetting or non-attachment which is the heart of the dhamma. For him, the natural surroundings are a key for personal transformation:

Trees, rocks, sand, even dirt and insects can speak. This doesn't mean, as some people believe, that they are spirits or gods. Rather, if we reside in nature near trees and rocks, we'll discover feelings and thoughts arising that are truly out of the ordinary. At first, we'll feel a sense of peace and quiet which may eventually move beyond that feeling to a transcendence of self. The deep sense of calm that nature provides through separation from the troubles and anxieties that plague us in the day-to-day world functions to protect heart and mind.... (Buddhādasā, 1991, pp. 5-7, translation by Swearer, 1997, pp. 24-25).

The importance of nature is also emphasized by numerous renowned Buddhist monks including P. A. Payutto (1937-). *He emphasizes the values of nature, particularly the forest. "The history of Buddhism ... indicates that monks saw the forest as a place of practice the dhamma and to achieve a feeling of well-being, a happy state of mind, and eventually higher states of mental consciousness" (Payutto, 1998, p. 22, translation by Swearer 1997, p. 33).* Moreover, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (2004), a famous scholar and a prolific writer on Buddhism and feminism (now known as Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, the first modern Thai Bhikkhuni [ordained female monk]), narrates that Buddhism has always viewed nature with respect. This position places a great deal of expectations on humans as they are regarded as an integral part

of nature. This means that when humans abuse nature, they abuse themselves. The Buddha's teaching highlights the human relationship with nature and humanity's obligation to preserve nature.

Zen is a blend of Indian Mahayāna Buddhism, Chinese Daoism, and Confucianism. Zen believes that all humans have an inherent Buddha nature (an ability to be enlightened). Zen shares with other Buddhist sects the common goals of ending suffering and attaining satori/enlightenment. Moreover, Zen believes that man and nature are closely related: "Nature produces man out of itself ... [Man] has his being rooted in nature ... therefore ... there must always be a friendly understanding and a sympathetic communication between man and nature" (Suzuki, 2015, p. 119).

The present study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What are the metaphorical expressions of PLANT METAPHOR in Thích Nhất Hạnh's Zen Buddhist texts?
2. What are the main concepts of Zen Buddhism that are conceptualized using PLANT METAPHOR?

Methods

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methodology was applied for arriving at the number of occurrences of PLANT METAPHOR appearing in metaphorical expressions (RQ1). Meanwhile qualitative methodology was applied for analyzing conceptual metaphors from metaphorical expressions. Also, Zen teachings were interpreted from conceptual metaphor (RQ2).

Selection Criteria of Sample Books

Hạnh is one of the most influential Zen monks. He has published a wide variety of books, many of which have been best sellers. Of his 136 books, 112 are in English, while the remainder are in Spanish, French, and Vietnamese. His works belong to different genres: sutra, prose, poetry, and children's literature. His teaching is easy to understand and practical and of interest to this researcher. For the selection of Hạnh's books for the present study, two criteria were applied: (1) books that reached a wide audience globally, that is, they were written in English, an international language; and (2) they were best sellers according to the two well-known websites: Amazon (Amazon, n.d.) and Goodreads (Goodreads, n.d.). This paper investigated Hạnh's English best-selling prose published from the 1970s up to the latest works published in 2019. The seven selected texts were: (1) *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975); (2) *Peace is Every Step* (1990); (3) *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995); (4) *You are Here* (2001); (5) *Your True Home* (2011); (6) *Fear* (2012); and (7) *How to See* (2019).

Corpus Building

A corpus of Hạnh's works was created by scanning Hạnh's sample books and converting the scanned documents to digitalized form using an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program. Some texts which were available online were downloaded in PDF form and converted into a plain text format. AntConc Software (Anthony, 2004) was used as a tool for

data analysis. The corpus of seven selected books consisted of 217,545 words and approximately 901 metaphorical expressions.

Identification of Metaphor of NATURE (Source Domain)

First, Hạnh's books were read carefully in order to grasp the overall message of his teaching as well as to ensure that there were metaphorical uses of words/terms related to NATURE. Next, definition of the word "nature" was looked up in various English dictionaries as well as English lexical meaning. The definition given by Collins (n.d.) where "nature" refers to "all the animals, plants, and other things in the world that are not made by people, and all the events and processes that are not caused by people" was selected. Based on Collins Dictionary's definition, the research searched for nature-related words/terms (as SD) in Hạnh's corpus. Finally, only metaphorical use of SD of PLANT was identified.

Regarding the metaphor identification process, Metaphorical Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen, 2010) was selected as a tool to identify metaphor in this study. MIPVU is a systematic procedure which enables an identification of metaphor-related words (MRWs). It provides a clear procedure in organizing and analyzing the data. In particular, it helps researchers to examine difficult borderline cases such as polywords (e.g., a good deal, by means of), idioms, phrasal verbs (e.g., make up for, do away with), and compounds (e.g., under-five). For instance, researchers can decide that the borderline cases such as the phrasal verb "make up for" (meaning "compensate") should be examined wholly as one lexical unit, and not separately as three lexical units: "make," "up," "for" (Steen, 2010, p. 26).

In identifying MRWs in Hạnh's corpus, the researcher followed the MIPVU steps: first, the researcher identified a lexical unit (i.e., word, phrase) in the discourse that might be a potential metaphor. Then, the lexical unit was analyzed for its metaphoricity by examining the contextual meaning and the basic meaning. If the contextual meaning and the basic meaning contrasted, the lexical unit was judged a metaphor, for example:

"Getting in touch with suffering will help us cultivate compassion and love... We all have the seeds (SD) of compassion, forgiveness, joy, and nonfear (TD) in us. If we're constantly trying to avoid suffering, there is no way for these [good] seeds (SD) to grow" (Your True Home, p. 82).

From the excerpt above, the researcher identified the lexical unit of potential MRWs to be the word "seed," then contextual meaning of "seed" was examined as meaning "positive and negative feelings/emotions/thoughts." Next, the basic meaning of "seed" was looked up in Collins Dictionary as meaning "the small, hard part of a plant from which a new plant grows." The researcher found that the contextual meaning and basic meaning contrasted. Also, the contextual meaning could be understood in relation to the basic meaning. The basic meaning related to parts of the plant which would grow into a root, a trunk, a flower, a fruit, and a mature plant, while the contextual meaning referred to something abstract, for example, feelings/emotions. Researchers could understand the beginning stage of feelings and thoughts which might develop and become expressed in words, actions, or habits.

Scope and Criteria of Metaphor Selection

To identify metaphor in this research, four criteria were applied. First, the focus was only on the SD which was from one word class “noun” (not including word classes “pronoun,” “verb,” “adjective”) because nouns “prototypically designate concrete, bounded, enduring entities, so that their meaning tend to be highly concrete and precise ... It is easiest to assign basic senses as we characterize them” (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p. 28). Second, only innovative and conventional metaphors¹ were of interest. Third, metonymy, fixed expressions (e.g., in the light of, on the ground of, and shine light on), idioms, and poem were excluded because metaphor was the focus of this study, other rhetorical devices, by themselves, deserved their own full scale study. Moreover, the focus of this study was on prose, hence, poem was not analyzed. Finally, sub-headings and footnotes were not included because they lacked context. Context was crucial in identifying and interpreting metaphor.

Findings and Discussion

The first research question asks what metaphorical expressions of PLANT METAPHOR are used in Thích Nhất Hạnh’s Zen Buddhist texts. Based on MIPVU, quantitative results of metaphorical expressions of PLANT in the corpus were obtained, as illustrated in Figure 1.

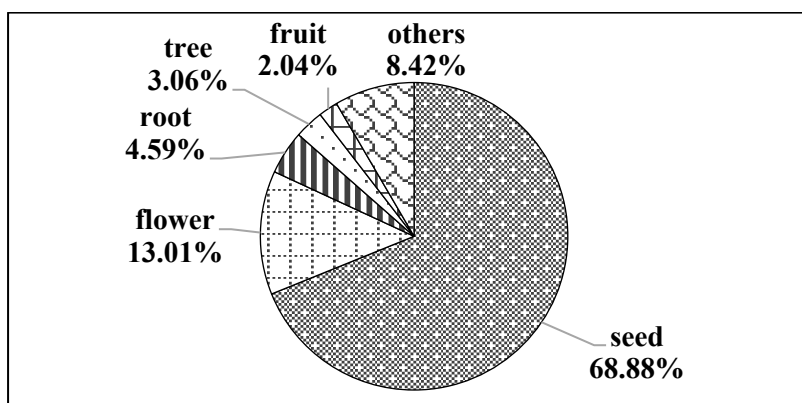


Figure 1: Percentages of PLANT METAPHOR

¹Conventional metaphors include “familiar comparisons that do not attract attention as a figure of speech. A conventional metaphor is heard or read in everyday language, and it lends some credibility to that specific culture’s understanding of the statement”, e.g., time flies (Dykstra, n.d.). On the other hand, creative metaphors are “those which a writer/speaker constructs to express a particular idea or feeling in a particular context, and which a reader/hearer needs to deconstruct in order to understand what is meant” (Knowles & Moon, 2006, p. 5), e.g., it was as quiet as a church mouse (Dykstra, n.d.).

Table 1: Source Domain “Seed(s)”

Source Domain	Metaphorical Expressions	Target Domains
seed	<i>Each of the fifty-one mental formations (TD) lies buried in the soil of consciousness in the form of a <u>seed</u> (SD) (You are Here, p. 30).</i>	mental formations (=characters of consciousness or mental properties)
	<i>Getting in touch with suffering will help us cultivate compassion and love... We all have the <u>seeds</u> (SD) of <u>compassion, forgiveness, joy, and nonfear</u> (TD) in us. If we're constantly trying to avoid suffering, there is no way for these [good] <u>seeds</u> (SD) to grow.” (Your True Home, p. 82).</i>	positive and negative mental formations
	<i>Buddhist sutras speak of Buddha nature (TD) as the <u>seed</u> (SD) of <u>enlightenment</u> that is already in everyone's consciousness (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 167).</i>	enlightenment
	<i>Each of our <u>life experiences</u> (TD) becomes a <u>seed</u> (SD) in our store consciousness (How to see, p. 89).</i>	life experience
	<i>With our daily practice of mindfulness we nourish the <u>seed</u> (SD) of <u>right view</u> (TD) (How to see, p. 42)</i>	right view or understanding
	<i>Buddhists say that everyone has the <u>seed</u> (SD) of <u>mindfulness</u> (TD) in the deepest level of his or her consciousness (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 183)</i>	mindfulness
	<i>“do I water your <u>seeds</u> (SD) of <u>joy</u> (TD)?” (Your True Home, p. 119)</i>	joy
	<i>“We all have all the possible <u>seeds</u> (SD) within us; they contain all the different <u>feelings, thoughts</u> (TD)” (How to See, p. 44)</i>	feelings and thoughts
	<i>these (negative) seeds can be transformed when we touch <u>the qualities of a Buddha</u> (TD), which are also <u>seeds</u> (SD) within us (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 44)</i>	Buddha nature (=ability to be enlightened)
	<i>Christians say that God is in everyone's heart. <u>The Holy Spirit</u> (TD) can be described as being always present in our hearts in the form of a <u>seed</u> (SD) (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 183).</i>	Holy Spirit (= to be one with God/awakening)

Among PLANT METAPHOR, Hạnh’s used seed(s) most frequently (68.88%). This was interesting as it yielded different TDs. As can be seen in Table 1, the SD “seed” represented the TDs of mental formations² (characters of consciousness or mental properties such as joy, jealousy, mindfulness), dharma teaching (right view or understanding), life, enlightenment, and Buddha nature/Buddha qualities/Holy Spirit (all these terms refer to an ability to be enlightened

²Fifty-one mental formations refers to characters of consciousness or mental properties including feeling, perception, volition, attention, contact, intention, determination, mindfulness, concentration, insight, faith, inner shame, shame before others, absence of craving, absence of hatred, absence of ignorance, diligence, tranquility, vigilance, equanimity, non-harming, non-fear, absence of anxiety, stability, loving kindness, compassion, joy, humility, happiness, feverlessness, freedom, craving, hatred, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, wrong view, anger, resentment, concealment, maliciousness, jealousy, selfishness, deceitfulness, guile, desire to harm, pride, lack of inner shame, lack of shame before others, restlessness, drowsiness, lack of faith, laziness, negligence, forgetfulness, distraction, lack of discernment, fear, anxiety, despair, regret, sleepiness, initial thought, sustained thought (Plum Village, n.d.).

or be one with God or Lord Buddha). To explicate the realization of these TDs, I discuss how they are realized in the text.

From Hanh's corpus, seeds were frequently used to represent different human's emotions, feelings, and thoughts which happened to all human beings. This is the reason they were often discussed by Hanh. Emotions, feelings, and thoughts were part of 51 mental formations, deliberately conceptualized as seeds: "Each of the fifty-one mental formations lies buried in the form of a seed."

Considering its development/growth, seeds are linked to humans as they indicate an initial stage where emotions/feelings/thoughts have not yet arisen into consciousness. They remain unconscious until they transform into trunk, fruits, flowers, and trees, in other words, the fully expressed emotions/feelings/thoughts. Seeds also represent general phenomena (both good and bad) in an initial stage such as life experiences and right view/understanding, as in "seed of right view." Right view is one of the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to cessation of suffering. Importantly, the Holy Spirit, Buddha nature/Buddha qualities (an ability to be awakened or to be one with God or Lord Buddha) were conceptualized as seeds: "when we touch the qualities of a Buddha, which are also seeds within us." The Holy Spirit, Buddha nature/Buddha qualities related to the beginning stage of practicing toward enlightenment which was the ultimate goal of Zen.

As discussed, seeds demonstrated their connections with humans. They were used to highlight the beginning and/or the cause of emotions/feelings and abstract concepts which gave rise to further thoughts and actions. Some seeds that were watered and well taken care of tend to grow and develop into root, buds, trunks, leaves, fruits and flowers. Other seeds that were not watered or nourished may weaken, shrivel, and finally die. Hanh perhaps teaches us to foster positive emotions and thoughts, such as mindfulness. If we keep having and expressing negative emotions and thoughts, they will become strengthened and eventually become bad habits in the future.

Moreover, with right conditions of sunlight, water, minerals, temperature, and farmers/gardeners, seeds will grow into different parts of plant. This is like human beings in that we are responsible for creating conditions to produce good emotions/feelings/thoughts so that they will be strengthened and increase in number. Good thoughts/feelings will bring about good actions/speech which will positively affect individuals and people around them.

Table 2: Source domain of "flower(s)"

Source Domain	Metaphorical Expressions	Target Domains
flower	<i>the flower of <u>tolerance to see and appreciate cultural diversity</u> (TD) is one <u>flower</u> (SD) we can cultivate for the children of the 21st century (Peace is Every Step, p. 134)</i>	tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity
	<i>I shall try to share some of my experiences of and insights into two of the world's beautiful <u>flowers</u> (SD), <u>Buddhism and Christianity</u> (TD), so that we as a society can begin to dissolve our wrong perceptions (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 11).</i>	Buddhism and Christianity
	<i>It is on the very ground of suffering... that we can contemplate <u>enlightenment</u> (TD) and well-being. It is exactly the muddy water that the <u>lotus</u> (SD) grows and blooms (Your True Home, p. 313)</i>	enlightenment

Flower(s) ranked second in frequency (13.01%). From Table 2, the SD “flower” represented the TDs of desirable phenomena, religion, and enlightenment, for example, flower was compared to desirable phenomena, that is, tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity. Religions were also compared to flowers, for example, Buddhism and Christianity were compared to beautiful flowers. Moreover, Hạnh represented enlightenment as a lotus. This may be because the lotus symbolizes purity in body, word, and spirit in Buddhism (Tran, 2010). All in all, flowers may be selected to represent these good and desirable phenomena due to their positive qualities such as aesthetics and fragrance.

Root(s) ranked third in frequency (4.59%). Table 3 shows that root represented the TDs of feelings/emotions (part of mental formations), ancestral bond and spiritual belief/religion. It is worth noticing that root referred to negative phenomena that needed to be transformed or alleviated such as unpleasant feelings of toothache: “Some feelings have their root in the physical form. For example, if you have a toothache, you have unpleasant feelings and you go to the dentist.” Occasionally, root(s) represented ancestral bonds and spiritual beliefs, as in “ancestral roots” and “spiritual roots.”

Interestingly, root has the characteristics of being deep seated and long lasting. Root has both negative and positive values. For the negative aspect, Hạnh portrays negative emotions/feelings/phenomena such as hatred, greed, and delusion as root: “emotions have deep roots in us ... finally they explode and cause hurt to ourselves and others.” These negative emotions/phenomena need to be eradicated to the root level otherwise they would grow back. The eradication can be painstakingly difficult and requires a long time and tremendous effort. On the other hand, root sometimes displays desirable and indispensable phenomena when referring to ancestral linkage and spiritual beliefs. Humans need ancestral and parental linkages as well as spiritual beliefs to fulfil a sense of self, a sense of belonging to the community, and to have a happy, peaceful, and balanced life.

Table 3: Source Domain of “Root(s)”

Source Domain	Metaphorical Expressions	Target Domains
root	<i>Some <u>feelings</u> (TD) have their <u>root</u> (SD) in the physical form. For example, if you have a <u>toothache</u>, you have unpleasant feelings and you go to the dentist to get relief from the pain. Other feelings arise from perceptions (You are Here, p. 27)</i>	feelings
	<i><u>emotions</u> (TD) have deep <u>roots</u> (SD) in us. They are so strong ... We deny and suppress them until finally they explode and cause hurt to ourselves and others (Fear, p. 89)</i>	emotions
	<i>we can be aware without judgement that our negative habit come from these <u>ancestral</u> (TD) <u>roots</u> (SD) (Your True Home, p. 72)</i>	ancestors
	<i>I (=Hạnh) have statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and also an image of Jesus Christ...I feel stronger because I have <u>more than one root</u> (SD) (=Buddhism and Christianity: (TD))” (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 100).</i>	spiritual beliefs

It could be observed from Tables 1-3 that the SDs of “seed,” “flower,” and “root” represented the same TDs of emotions/feelings/thoughts. However, it seemed that seeds represented both positive and negative emotions/feelings/thoughts whereas flowers tended to associate with positive feelings. Root normally linked with negative feelings such as anger.

Another interesting observation was that although seed and flower related to enlightenment, seeds seemed to represent the potential of humans to become enlightened or the beginning stage while flowers symbolized enlightenment or the final outcome of persistent and strenuous religious practices.

It is worth stressing that other parts of PLANT were also used to portray different concepts/phenomena, for example, branches represented different religions, as in “Christianity is a kind of continuation of Judaism, as is Islam. All the branches belong to the same tree” (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 29). This might imply the concept of interbeing of different religions. All religions are interrelated hence those who hold different religious beliefs should not be discriminated against. Interestingly, different types of plants and grains under PLANT METAPHOR were used to refer to human beings, for example, corn, as in “If things were impermanent, you could not have children (TD) and your children would never grow up. When you sow corn seeds (SD), they would never be able to grow” (You are Here, p. 104). In this case, corn was used to demonstrate impermanence through the changing stages of the human lifecycle and corn. As can be seen, different parts of the PLANT and different types of PLANT were used to represent different concepts, and in turn, they could be interpreted from the perspective of Zen teachings.

With regard to the second research question, which asks what main concepts of Zen Buddhism are conceptualized using PLANT METAPHOR. In Hahn’s corpus, many Zen concepts were identified, for example, mindfulness, interbeing, suchness, and impermanence. The researcher found that mindfulness was one of the most outstanding concepts in Hahn’s corpus. It occurred most frequently and its importance was explicitly emphasized by Hahn. Mindfulness was considered the fundamental and essential Buddhist virtue/practice that helped create other higher-level virtues/practices such as concentration and insight. The concept of mindfulness was conceptualized from conceptual metaphors which were derived from the metaphorical expressions of PLANT. As can be seen in Table 4, mindfulness was interpreted from various conceptual metaphors abstracted from different parts of PLANT (i.e., seed, fruit) as well as types of PLANT, which were used as the SDs. The concept of mindfulness is discussed in detail in the next sections.

Table 4 shows that mindfulness was represented by different SDs of PLANT (i.e., seed, fruit) and types of PLANT as appeared in different metaphorical expressions. Mindfulness was interpreted through the conceptual metaphors: MINDFULNESS/ BUDDHA NATURE/ HOLY SPIRIT ARE SEEDS, MENTAL FORMATIONS (EMOTIONS) ARE SEEDS, MINDFULNESS IS FRUIT, and HUMANS ARE PLANTS. As described, mindfulness is “the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present, and at one with those around you and with what you are doing” (Hanh Foundation, n.d.). Following his line of thought, Hahn urges people to apply mindfulness in all activities of daily life. This is because mindfulness can transform undesirable emotions/feelings into positive ones. Moreover, it can develop into proper/good speech, actions, and thoughts, which then lead to happy and peaceful co-existence with others in society. This is examined through conceptual metaphors.

Table 4: Conceptual Metaphors Relating to Mindfulness Abstracted from PLANT**Metaphor**

Zen Teachings	Target Domains	Source Domains	Conceptual Metaphors	Metaphorical Expressions
Mindfulness is the good seed that needs to be watered since it helps transform bad mental formations (feeling/thought) into good ones. Most importantly, mindfulness is the basis for enlightenment (goal of Zen).	mindfulness	seed	MINDFULNESS IS A SEED	<i>Buddhists say that everyone has the <u>seed</u> (SD) of <u>mindfulness</u> (TD) in the deepest level of his or her consciousness (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 183).</i>
Zen Buddhism believes that everyone has an inherent Buddha nature.	Buddha nature (ability to be enlightened)	seed	BUDDHA NATURE IS A SEED	<i>these (negative) seeds can be transformed when we touch the <u>qualities of a Buddha</u> (TD), which are also <u>seeds</u> (SD) within us (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 44).</i>
Everyone can be one with God/awakening	Holy Spirit (to be one with God/awakening)	seed	HOLY SPIRIT IS A SEED	<i>Christians say that God is in everyone's heart. <u>The Holy Spirit</u> (TD) can be described as being always present in our hearts in the form of a <u>seed</u> (SD) (Living Buddha, Living Christ, p. 183).</i>
Mindfulness can help raise an awareness of emotions as well as control and transform negative mental formations into good ones.	mental formations	seed	MENTAL FORMATIONS ARE SEEDS	<i><u>Each of the fifty-one mental formations</u> (TD) lies buried in the soil of consciousness in the form of a <u>seed</u> (SD) (You are Here, p. 30).</i>
Mindfulness raises our awareness thus we should practice it in our daily life.	mindfulness	seed/fruit	MINDFULNESS IS SEED/FRUIT	<i>Thus mindfulness (TD) is at the same time a means and an end, the <u>seed</u> and the <u>fruit</u> (SD) (Miracle of Mindfulness, p. 14).</i>
Mindfulness can calm strong emotions down. It is through belly breathing which fosters concentration and mindfulness.	human body parts	parts of the tree	DIFFERENT HUMAN BODY PARTS ARE DIFFERENT PARTS OF A TREE → HUMANS ARE PLANTS	<i>during a storm of emotion, you should not stay at the level of <u>head or heart</u> (TD), which are like the <u>top of the tree</u> (SD)... you have to leave the heart, the eye of the storm, and come back to the <u>trunk of the tree</u> (SD). Your trunk is <u>1 centimeter below your navel</u> (TD)" (You are Here, p. 72).</i>

Zen Teachings	Target Domains	Source Domains	Conceptual Metaphors	Metaphorical Expressions
Mindful people are dependable and attract other people. People like to be around mindful people.	Mindful people	Beautiful trees with shade	MINDFUL PEOPLE ARE BEAUTIFUL TREES WITH SHADE → HUMANS ARE PLANTS	<i>they (people with mindfulness) (TD) will be like <u>beautiful trees</u> (SD), and visitors will want to come and sit under their shade (Peace is Every Step, p. 90).</i>

Conceptual metaphors, depicting mindfulness, were MINDFULNESS/BUDDHA NATURE/HOLY SPIRIT ARE SEEDS, as shown in metaphorical expressions as in “these [negative] seeds can be transformed when we touch the qualities of a Buddha, which are also seeds within us.” Buddha nature or mindfulness helped transform bad mental formations (emotions, feelings, thoughts) into good mental formations. Furthermore, it was fundamental to growing other virtues and leading to the pathway to Nirvana.

From Table 4, mindfulness was represented in three ways. First, it was represented as a seed which could be cultivated and nourished by continual watering until it was strengthened and later grew into desirable mental formations and virtues such as understanding, insight, and awakening: “Each of the fifty-one mental formations lies buried ... in the form of a seed.” Another example of presenting mindfulness as seeds was done through actual association with seeds and fruits. This was observed in the conceptual metaphors MENTAL FORMATIONS ARE SEEDS/FRUITS, as in “mindfulness is at the same time ... the seed and the fruit.”

Second, mindfulness was demonstrated as a way to save people from negative emotions/mental formations (e.g., anger and fear) and transforming them into positive emotions/mental formations. The relevant conceptual metaphor was HUMANS ARE PLANTS: “during a storm of emotion, you should not stay at the level of head or heart, which are like the top of the tree, ... and come back to the trunk of the tree.” Here, the representation was realized through the comparison of the human body with the parts of the tree. During a storm of emotion such as anger, it was advised to step back (i.e., not focusing on the feeling of anger which happened in the head/heart, compared to the top of the tree) and be mindful of breathing by focusing on the belly, that is, belly breathing (human’s belly was compared to a trunk of the tree). With mindful breathing, anger can be recognized, its causes learned about, and it can be calmed down. Anger will thus be no longer suffered from and it might finally be transformed to positive feelings such as love and compassion.

Third, mindfulness was demonstrated as one of desirable qualities of human. A mindful person is good, pleasant, and dependable, s/he normally attracts other people. The representation was done through the association of types of people and types of PLANTS, as in “they (= mindful people) will be like beautiful trees, and visitors will want to come and sit under their shade.” The conceptual metaphor was HUMANS ARE PLANTS.

Having examined Hạnh’s works, he used numerous devices to disseminate his teaching such as storytelling, questions-answers, repetition, hyperbole, giving quotes, and direct explanation – but metaphors seemed to be his key instruments. Metaphor is a powerful tool in religious discourse because religions are replete with abstract and sophisticated

concepts/notions that are difficult to understand and sometimes cannot be described in simple literal words.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

In conclusion, the aim of this article was to report on the use of PLANT metaphor in Hạng's Zen teaching. The SD of "seed" was used most frequently, followed by "flower," and "root." Results of the present study confirmed those of previous studies in that metaphor was used extensively in religious discourse (Charteris-Black, 2004; El-Sharif, 2011; Kövecses, 2002; Neary 2017).

The present study investigated Hạng's religious discourse. Based on the analysis, it was revealed that Hạng's work is clearly related with the nature of PLANTS as part of nature which is represented in various conceptual metaphors: RELIGION IS PLANT, MORALITY/VIRTUE IS PLANT, HUMANS ARE PLANTS, MENTAL FORMATIONS (EMOTIONS) ARE SEEDS. Readers may have been impressed by Hạng's eloquent use of PLANT METAPHOR and learned of the Zen concept of mindfulness. His writing successfully serves the aesthetic and didactic functions. It can attract readers who love nature and thus appreciate his teaching with joy and happiness.

This study of metaphor in religious discourse may help enrich the current understanding of Zen Buddhism taught by Hạng. Readers can see the relationship between PLANT metaphor, human cognition, and Zen teaching. Also, readers can learn of the Zen way of life and understand how Zen followers think and act. Through Hạng's ingenious use of metaphor, he proffers simple and practical guidelines of how to lead a happy and peaceful life individually and collectively.

It should be noted that some of the selected books are translated from Vietnamese or French into English, and the translation process may affect the use of metaphor. Moreover, out of Hạng's 112 books available in the English language, only seven were selected for this study, this meant that not all metaphors of NATURE used by Hạng were explored. Moreover, apart from nouns, metaphor of NATURE was used pervasively by Hạng, through other word classes such as verb (e.g., "If the seeds of our anger are watered again, our anger will be reborn") or adjective (e.g., "A mind without anger is cool, fresh, and sane"), or pronouns (e.g., "But how can a river take her own life?").

Lastly, other outstanding Zen concepts found in Hạng's corpus included interbeing, impermanence, and non-duality. They were represented by PLANT METAPHOR and other domains, for example, impermanence was often related to WATER METAPHOR. These are interesting areas worth exploring in future research.

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Appendix

Books PLANT	Miracle of mindfulness	You are here	Peace is every step	How to see	Living Buddha, Living Christ	Your true home	Fear	Total
tree		3	2		3	1	1	10
trees			1	1				2
seed	2	6	7	15	30	12	23	95
seeds		36	42	17	19	32	29	175
root		1			4		1	6
roots	1	2	1		6	1	1	12
leaves		1						1
trunk		2				2	1	5
branch					1			1
branches		1			1			2
petals							1	1
flower	1	13	9		2	2	2	29
flowers		4	3	1	3	3	2	16
rose		1		1				2
rosebush		1						1
lotus						3		3
fruit	2				1			3
orange		5						5
stem			4					4
stems			3					3
thorn	2							2
waterplants	1							1
potatoes			1					1
lettuce			3					3
corn		2						2
corn (kernel)						2		2
corn (stalk)						2		2
vine					2			2
duckweed							1	1
TOTAL (plant)	9	78	76	35	72	60	62	392