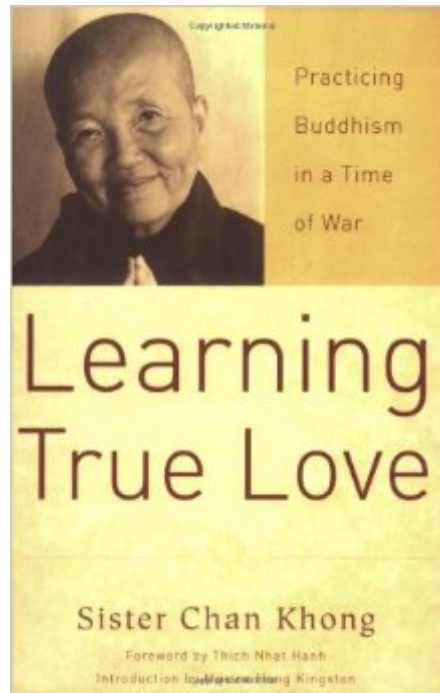


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# Learning True Love: Practicing Buddhism In A Time Of War



## Synopsis

Learning True Love, the autobiography of Sister Chãn Khãng, stands alongside the great spiritual autobiographies of our century. It tells the story of her spiritual and personal odyssey, both in her homeland and in exile. Its anecdotal style presents an intensely personal portrait of a woman with astonishing courage, offering us a perspective on the suffering of the Vietnamese people. This unique autobiography tells the gripping story of a woman who not only lived but made history, and whose life of single-minded dedication to humanity can serve as an inspiration for us all. Sister Chãn Khãng was born in a village on the Mekong River Delta in 1938. In her teens she devoted her life to the development and practice of nonviolence grounded in the Buddhist precepts of non-killing and compassionate action. Propelled by her passionate dedication to social change, she began working in the slums of Saigon, distributing food, working with the sick, and teaching children. When she was 21 years old she met the man who until to this day remains her teacher and spiritual companion: Thich Nhat Hanh. With him she co-founded the School of Youth for Social Service in 1964, which grew to an organization of over 10,000 young people organizing medical, educational, and agricultural facilities in rural Vietnam, and rebuilding villages destroyed in the fighting. Sister Chãn Khãng became well known in the anti-war and peace community for her work promoting human rights and protesting repression and violence, often at risk of her own life. She continues to do this work today. After the war she became one of the co-founders of Plum Village, the spiritual center, that is home to Thich Nhat Hanh's community in France, where she continues to be deeply involved in the development and vision for this unique community. In January of 2005, after nearly 40 years in exile, Sister Chãn Khãng was able to return on a 3-month visit to Vietnam. In this fully revised edition of Learning True Love she movingly describes the return to her homeland, the reunions with many old friends and fellow activists, and shares her impression of the "new Vietnam," where Buddhists still struggle for religious freedom and the re-establishment of their own organizations. Learning True Love is a moving personal memoir, an introduction to the mindfulness teachings and life of Thich Nhat Hanh and his community in exile, an overview to the development of the European and American peace and human rights movement, and an introduction to the engaged and practical style of Vietnamese Buddhism. It documents the process that brought an end to the US Vietnam war, and gives a lively summary of Vietnamese history from 1945 to the current political, social and spiritual climate in Vietnam. Learning True Love also portraits some of the many remarkable people that shared Sister Chãn Khãng's path. Foremost however it is the remarkable and impressive story of a very courageous woman, whose journey from an accredited biologist at the University of Paris to a Buddhist nun, gives her unique insight

into life's central questions and the ability to address them in an unflinching and straightforward manner. Forewords by Thich Nhat Hanh and Maxine Hong-Kingston

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I totally disagree with the "library journal" review. Not only was this book inspiring, heartwarming, and unique, it told a tale of a woman who defied so many odds by transforming her suffering into the desire to help others move forward into peace. I have read many books by Buddhist scholars before, but none as simple and biographical as this. It was heartbreaking at times; hearing about killings, learning about lost loved ones, learning true love, all of this is conveyed in such a way that you feel you're actually there. There is no broken English in this book, I don't know what the review is talking about. There's only one typo that I found in the entire book, and it was a typing error, not a grammatical one. This book should be on your priority list: if you give it a try, you'll find that you want to keep it in your collection forever. It's a priceless concentration of thoughts that move and inspire you, both to touch suffering and not to despair when faced with challenges.

This is the autobiography of a Vietnamese Buddhist nun who spent her life trying to help people whose lives were devastated by the wars. Because of her close association with Thich Nhat Hanh, it is to some degree an informal history of his activities as well. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is her frustration with the American peace movement. Her life (and his) are both quite inspiring, so this is a challenging and uplifting book. I would happily recommend this book to anyone

interested in Vietnamese Buddhism, the war and the peace movements, or Vietnam in general.

This is a book of many purposes. You may be interested in the peace movement, practical Buddhism, the Vietnam War, neutrality, or a hundred other human topics, and this book will do more than just meet your interest. It will inform, but it will also inspire. It will teach, but it will also motivate. It will calm, but it will also kindle. Why? You will find here the first-person perspective and journey of the author through the difficulties of not only the Vietnam War, but personal relationships and choices and commitments. In such essential and groundbreaking work, there are wonderful seasons of success and painful times of disappointment. This book teaches in three ways: through what is written, by personal example, and by the larger unfolding story of how people and events intersect with life choices. I did not find it hard to take the author's experiences and apply some of the insights to my own life. Some have commented negatively on the writing, but I was so carried by the telling that I did not notice. Although parts of the story itself may be difficult to read through, the narrative is easy to follow and digest as you proceed. I found the book true to its title; you also can learn something of true love by reading and reflecting.

Sister Chan Kong is truly a living bodhisattva. Her selflessness, generosity, and meritorious actions shine through the words of her autobiography. In adversity, she tirelessly sought to improve the conditions of others and ease their suffering. The book left me wanting to know more of her life. Each picture that I have been able to find of her is a face of serenity, peace, and calm. I have a greater understanding of the suffering of the Vietnamese people.

This is a beautiful gem of a book. The author has much wisdom and humility. She is a true master in balancing courage and compassion. Anyone interested in social work, peace work or Buddhism can learn from it. For anyone who has enjoyed the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh (as I have) and / or been curious about the experiences of devout Buddhists in Vietnam, this book will provide you with a picture of how daily struggles and major decisions were reconciled.

Through her book, I came to know of the struggles, pains that the ordinary Vietnamese suffered during the difficult years. And the sacrifices and heroic stories of the many bodhisattvas like Sister Chan Kong, Master Thich Nhat Hanh and many many others. I salute them for their courage in stepping outside of orthodox buddhism to put it into practice. I cried through many of the pages. Thank you so much for showing the world especially buddhists how to put compassion and

understanding into action and what true love is all about. Great BOOK! It is my first kindle book.

This book was so inspiring to me. It is the life story of a woman that has stood in the face of the storm and has emerged with clarity, compassion, and hope. It teaches every one of us who is seeking to build a better world how to give everything we have, and if our work is destroyed tomorrow to begin to rebuild with faith, again and again.

Sister Chan is not a writer by trade, but her straightforward, honest prose makes this book an inspiring and compelling read. Underlying her amazing story is the message that any person, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is capable of effecting positive change in our world. Beautiful words that challenged me to make changes in my own life.

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