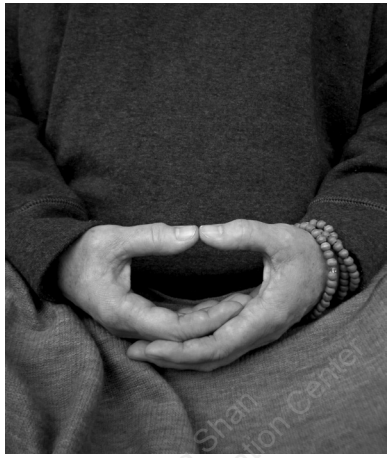


International Guang Shan Translation Center

Meditation

Buddhism in Every Step A18
（英文版）

Venerable Master Hsing Yun

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Recently, the practice of meditation has spread from the East to all parts of the West. It is no longer confined to the cloistered halls of the monastery but has expanded into the lay community. Meditation allows us to make our busy lives tranquil and refreshed. For people living in today's hectic society, being able to sit in meditation a few minutes each day and occasionally participate in meditation retreats at a Buddhist temple can help us find the energy to keep moving forward.

The Chan School is the Buddhist school of thought that emphasizes meditation as the way to enlightenment; some Buddhists trace the origins of the Chan School to the assembly on Vulture Peak when the Buddha held a flower in front of the assembly and his disciple Mahakasyapa smiled. This event shows the transmission of the wordless

teachings of Chan to Mahakasyapa, and since then, the word Chan can also be used to describe an aesthetic and a way of life. The Buddha did not only give the gift of Chan to Mahakasyapa but also to each and every sentient being. Chan is not some mysterious and obscure phenomenon, nor is it unique to Buddhism. The human world is filled with the subtleties of Chan, and there is nothing in nature that does not reflect its wondrousness.

The spirit of Chan is not limited only to sitting meditation in a meditation hall. Every movement, even arching one's eyebrows or winking, is filled with the profundity of Chan. Chan is not limited to contemplating the mind with one's eyes closed. The daily activities of dressing, eating, walking, and sleeping are all Chan. Chan means imbuing one's everyday labor with the tranquility of meditation so action and tranquility become one. Chan is using all of one's body and mind in every moment of life in order to penetrate the mysteries of the universe.

The great Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue (665–713 CE) said it well: "Walking is Chan; sitting is Chan. Speech, silence, motion, and stillness—their essence is peace." For true meditators, Chan is everything we see; it is everywhere.

Meditation is a light for all humanity. It can connect each of us to one another and the outside world. Meditating is social and humanistic, and

all Chan practitioners are connected through the transmission of teachings; that is, they all share their teachings with one another. Throughout the history of the Chan School, there are thousands of stories of people and their transmission of the Dharma.

Modern life is complex and disordered, but we can use the power of meditative concentration to calm our restless minds and bodies. The wave of industrialization that has swept across the globe since the twentieth century has quickened the pace of life, and increased production has stimulated people's desire for enjoyment. With technology, people are now frantically engaged in working or socializing all the time and have forgotten to stop for a while and look at themselves. The competitiveness of life has made the sense of alienation between people increasingly severe; excessive sensual enjoyment has anesthetized the spirit. The words "nothingness" and "loss" are now commonplace in our modern era. Meditation is truly the best medicine to mend the hardships of our times.

I. The Right Attitude for Meditation

Meditation should not be done for the sake of the practitioner alone. One who wishes to practice meditation must have the great kindness, compassion, and

zeal of a bodhisattva.[1] They must not be selfish and only wish liberation for themselves. Therefore, to meditate we must:

- **Contemplate** by reflecting upon ourselves and looking into our behavior.
- **Improve** and constantly progress.
- **Cultivate** without looking outside ourselves.
- **Abandon** all notions and not be concerned with success or failure.

As one enters a meditation hall to begin practice, one should put aside everyday concerns and be ready to receive instruction. Likewise, the rules and regulations of the meditation hall should be strictly observed, and one should not bend the rules or seek special privileges to make things easier. We should nurture a compassionate mind, for a compassionate person is gentle by nature and can more easily enter deep meditation. We must do what is right and refrain from doing what is wrong, repenting our misdeeds no matter how big or small. We should decrease our distractions and maintain regular habits of eating, drinking, and sleeping. Lastly, we should have faith and believe that each of us, and all sentient beings, possess Buddha nature, and we should trust that our teacher is a well-cultivated person.

1. A Buddhist practitioner who has vowed to become a Buddha and liberate all beings.

II. The Practice of Meditation

As Chan Master Rujing said, "The purpose of meditation is to liberate the mind and body." It is not necessary to burn incense, perform prostrations, recite Amitabha Buddha's name, do penance, or read sutras, though some practitioners do these things as well. Simply sitting in meditation will do. In the Chan tradition, meditation does not mean pondering something in deep thought, nor does it mean sitting blankly.

Sitting meditation is different from chanting sutras or paying homage to the Buddha. A meditator must cast off all mundane phenomena, not be moved by worry or doubt, and practice meditation as the teaching of the greatest, most supreme happiness. Meditation is like returning home and sitting firmly and peacefully upon the seat of one's own Dharma nature. In meditation, one breathes just as all of the Buddhas of the ten directions and wanders freely in the ocean of the dharma realms.

To realize sitting meditation's goal of liberating the mind and body, we must free ourselves from the delusion of discriminating thought; even the world of the Buddha and enlightenment must be washed away without a trace.

Amid the silence and the curling smoke of their ancient temples, thousands of years ago, Chan masters sat in meditation, burning stick after stick of

incense.[2] They dedicated their lives to sitting meditation and made it their goal to put an end to delusion and the agitation of the body and mind. They hoped that through constant daily meditation, they could purify the mind and merge into limitless time and space, attaining freedom and liberation beyond enlightenment or delusion. If you wish to enjoy this kind of meditative bliss, you must actually go and sit in meditation. Only someone drinking a glass of water can know if the water is hot or cold, and meditation is the same way.

Experienced meditators can enter meditative concentration no matter where they are, be it beside a stream in a forest, inside a mountain cave, or among some graves, but for those beginning the practice, it is best to choose an indoor area away from outside noises. Such locations bring better results. The lighting in the room should be moderate: too much light is harsh on the eyes, while too little light can make one drowsy. It is best if an image of the Buddha is placed in the room so offerings can be made by burning incense as a source of inspiration. To avoid catching a cold, do not sit where there is a draft.

Before sitting in meditation, you should also pay attention to what you eat and wear. It is best to not

2. This is a reference to meditating for a long time. Traditionally, a meditation session lasts for the length of time it takes a single stick of incense to burn.

meditate within an hour of finishing a meal since at that time blood has rushed to the stomach and intestines, and most people can easily become drowsy. You should not be too full or too hungry; seventy to eighty percent full is best. Your clothing should be loose, comfortable, and soft to promote good circulation. Having sufficient sleep will also prevent you from falling asleep during meditation and wasting precious time.

Once all preparatory work is complete, you can then begin sitting in meditation. In the Chan School, sitting meditation is generally divided into three stages: regulating the body, regulating the breath, and regulating the mind.[3]

Regulating the Body

The first step in adopting a proper meditation posture is to cross the legs. There are two basic positions for meditation: the half-lotus (*see figure 1 on page 9*) and full-lotus (*see figure 2*). In the half-lotus position, one foot is placed on top of the opposite leg with the other foot tucked underneath. In full-lotus position, both feet are placed on top of the opposite leg, with the right foot on top of the left leg and the left foot on top of the right leg.

3. A more complete explanation can be found in Master Zhizhe's *Smaller Text of Stopping Delusion and Seeing Truth* (小止觀).

If you can't get into full-lotus position, half-lotus is fine. If you can't get into half-lotus position, then sit with the ankles crossed in a stable position. However, the lotus position in particular is helpful for stilling the restless mind and body, making it much easier to concentrate.

The next step is to form the proper *mudra* (*see figure 3 on page 10*) with one's hands. First, place one hand on top of the other, with both hands facing up. The tips of both thumbs should be lightly touching each other, and both arms should be kept close but naturally to one's sides. This is called the "Dharma Realm Samadhi Mudra." This mudra promotes good circulation throughout the body during meditation.

During meditation, the back should be kept straight, and the shoulders should be kept even; do not lean to the left or right. Keep the neck close to the back collar so the ears and shoulders are lined up straight when seen from the side. Tuck the chin in, and lightly close the mouth. The tip of the tongue should rest against the upper palate to promote salivation and good digestion. For beginners, it is best to keep the eyes slightly open and staring downward at a spot about two to three feet in front of your seat to ward off sleepiness.

Regulating the Breath

The breath can be regulated through the contemplation of counting breaths. By counting each breath as



Figure 1: Half Lotus



Figure 2: Full Lotus



Figure 3: Mudra

it goes in and out from one to ten, our rough breathing can be regulated until it is so subtle and gentle that it is hardly there at all.

Regulating the Mind

Thoughts are like wild horses: they gallop about and are not easily controlled. But without regulating one's thoughts, merely sitting on a meditation mat is meaningless. There are many ways to go about regulating our minds. You can engage in various contemplations that focus the mind to a single point, visualize the Buddha's thirty-two marks, recite mantras or Amitabha Buddha's name, or consider *gongans*.[4]

4. This term was adopted by the Chan tradition to refer to a phrase or exchange of questions and answers that expresses a paradox. Contemplating a *gongan* helps one transcend logic and assumptions.

Any method is fine, as long as it stabilizes one's mind and thoughts. You can see what works the best for you.

The above is a simple introduction to the practice of sitting meditation. There are also some other aspects that beginning meditators should consider:

- When first sitting down, use both hands to slightly lift your clothing. This helps prevent clothes from being too tight in some areas and making you uncomfortable.
- It is best to remove wristwatches, glasses, or any other item that may hamper circulation.
- Do not sit under an air conditioner or near an electric fan. It is also best to cover the knees with a towel or blanket to keep them warm and prevent arthritis.
- It is best to practice meditation on a dry, wooden floor or on a tatami mat.
- Select a sitting cushion based on one's own body. Choose a level of thickness and firmness that allows you to sit up straight and does not hinder circulation.
- Beginning meditators should be guided by an experienced teacher, so they do not deviate from a proper form of practice.

- Do not force yourself to sit too long: practicing frequently for shorter periods of time is better than straining yourself.

III. The Benefits of Meditation

Chan is a flower for all mankind, shining its light on human life. Chan is wisdom, humor, and the true mind. It is our intrinsic nature, a treasure shared in common by the entire human race.

Though Chan comes to us from the ancient past, it is a wellspring of happiness for modern people as well. Chan can expand our horizons, fortify our willpower, improve our health, enhance our wisdom, harmonize the spirit, transform bad habits, temper the mind, and enhance memory.

The Chan practice of meditation allows us to reduce the afflictions of daily life and change our views, so they do not conflict with reality. Many contradictory and contrasting phenomena can actually be brought together. Meditation allows us to adopt the temperament of a wandering monk who comes and goes as he or she pleases. Whether we are rich or poor, we are all right. We become able to see through the illusions of the world and attain the freedom of liberation. The benefits of meditation outshine everything else. Through meditation, our fears disappear. Even the cycle of birth and death no longer frightens us. Through meditation, our minds

become focused, and we gain strength. When the mind is concentrated and we are able to gain insight, it becomes easy to fulfill our aspirations—nothing can fail.

Additionally, it is through the practice of meditation that we can obtain measureless meditative bliss, Dharma joy, and many other benefits, such as:

Stress Relief

The stress of daily life comes from the scattered confusion within the mind and our mistaken understanding of the way things are. Meditation quiets the mind and stills our thoughts, so we can return to our intrinsic nature. This helps us to distinguish the correct view from the wrong ones, so we can rectify our misunderstandings about the world. By correcting our views, the stress of daily life can be reduced and then alleviated.

Improved Health

The sutras say, "When the mind arises, all phenomena arise." Modern medical science has proven that emotions like worry, greed, and anger play a large part in the illnesses of the human body. Meditation gives us a peaceful temperament, allows us to breathe calmly, and makes us feel refreshed. Meditation also enhances circulation and boosts metabolism. Not only does meditation make us healthier, it can relieve sickness and help us live longer.

Elevated Morality

Because today's society has so many technological advances and material abundance, most people spend their days restlessly seeking sensual pleasures, fame, and power. By doing so, they cloud their minds and lose their sense of who they are. Through regularly engaging in meditation, we can become our own masters and no longer be overly attached to material things. Then, we can elevate our own internal sense of morality and transform our disposition.

Happiness

The Buddha once said, "Meditation enables us to abide in Dharma joy within the world." Dharma joy is a wonderful kind of happiness produced from a tranquil mind. Such joy cannot be compared to the five desires of everyday existence: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. All those who diligently practice sitting meditation can obtain true bliss.

Wisdom

The Suramgama Sutra says, "Take focusing the mind as your precepts. Meditative concentration arises from the precepts; wisdom arises from meditative concentration." Meditation calms the body and spirit and purifies the mind. Not only does this develop intrinsic wisdom, it allows one to win the love and respect of others, making all things easier

to accomplish. This is why meditation is also an important part of the path of cultivating merit and wisdom.

Seeing Intrinsic Nature

When the Buddha achieved enlightenment, he said, "All sentient beings have the Tathagata's[5] wisdom and virtue, but they fail to realize it because they cling to deluded thoughts and attachments." Meditation eliminates affliction and deluded thoughts, allowing us to be quiet both within and without. When the mind reaches *nirvana,* it fully expands into enlightenment. This is why the meditation hall is also called "the Buddha's court." As long as we put in the effort, we will be able to see intrinsic nature and attain Buddhahood.

IV. Meditation Programs at the Temple

To meet the needs of all levels of meditators, Fo Guang Shan branch temples offer various kinds of meditation programs. Here is a brief description of the various programs that are offered:

Preliminary Meditation Practice

This is for beginners or corporations and organizations who are interested in meditation and would

5. One who has attained full realization of suchness, true essence, or actuality.

like to learn more about how to conduct oneself in a meditation hall and what sitting meditation is all about. Such programs offer one or two hours of basic meditation instruction so participants can briefly experience the peace of meditation. These preliminary programs can help create good causes and conditions that can lead to deeper practice in the future.

Meditation Classes

For those who have participated in various kinds of short-term meditation practice and wish to gain a systematic understanding of meditation practice, regular classes are offered. Such classes meet once a week for two to four hours at a time for eight- to twelve-week periods. Meditation classes offer an organized, systematic, and sequential course of study that develops correct understanding and helps individuals build a Humanistic Buddhist perspective on life.

Meditation Retreats

For those wishing to further increase their experience with meditation, retreats lasting anywhere from one half-day to three full days long are offered. Participants can enroll as their schedules allow: those who would like to participate in an extended meditation period but cannot because of work may

conveniently enroll in a half-day retreat, while those who can dedicate a weekend or a holiday to meditation can enroll in a one-, two-, or three-day retreat.

Meditation Camp

In Fo Guang Shan, meditation camps are regularly held twice a year during winter and summer vacations when college and high school students can receive training in meditation. During such camps, both learning and practice are emphasized. The five days of study give the participants a general summary of meditation methods and a basic experience of the practice, as well as an overview of how to practically apply what they learn in everyday life.

Seven-Day Meditation Retreat

For advanced practitioners, seven-day retreats are offered, designed to provide participants with an authentic realization by focusing on eliminating self-attachment. Each day of the retreat features eleven meditation sessions, interspersed with Dharma instruction given by the retreat leaders. The discipline supervisor watches over everyone's observance of the rules, while the meditation supervisor patrols the hall to see if any meditators have become drowsy or distracted. The meditation supervisor will approach such individuals and tap them with a wooden, sword-shaped meditation stick as

a warning to practice harder. Time is set aside for tea and light snacks, which enable the meditators to recharge their energy and train them to remain focused amid activity. Interviews are arranged after the fourth and seventh days in which participants can ask for instruction from the retreat leaders regarding any specific questions they might have about the practice.

V. Dharma Instruments and Signals

The last chapter of *The Three Thousand Rules of the Proper Manners of the Great Bhiksus* describes how group recitation of the precepts, sutra chanting, assemblies of the monastic community, and monastic meals are all marked by the sounds of the bell and wooden board, which give everyone in the temple their marching orders by marking when meditation begins and ends in the meditation hall. They are the "eyes and ears of heavenly beings" and must be accorded their proper respect. The bell and wooden board work in unison, with the combination of their sounds each having their own special meaning. The life of a meditator needs no verbal signals, for each day is regulated by the simple commands of the bell and wooden board. The various Dharma instruments in a meditation hall each have their own special meanings and are listed below:



The Bell and Wooden Board

These instruments hang above the discipline supervisor's incense table, with the bell above and the wooden board below. Their specific dimensions vary according to the size of the meditation hall and the traditions of the meditation lineage. The instruments are used to mark the beginning of meditation, Dharma instruction, and tea breaks with a double strike of the board. They also serve as the primary signals for the "four beginnings and four endings" of daily rest and practice within the Linji tradition. Those responsible for sounding the bell and wooden board should strike the wooden board with 80 percent of the strength of a full stroke and the bell with 60 percent. The speed should be even and regular.



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The Signal Board

Somewhat smaller than the wooden board, the signal board hangs on the wall near the bell and wooden board. It is used to signal the end of walking meditation sessions or to urge the meditators on to another walking meditation session after Dharma instruction.

The Wooden Fish

The wooden fish is placed on the incense table of the discipline supervisor and is used to signal the beginning of sessions, break times, the beginning of meditation practice during secondary sessions, and the end of meditation practice.



The Wooden Blocks

These two long, rectangular blocks of wood are struck together to signal assembly for entering the meditation hall, the end of walking meditation sessions, and to reenter the hall for a sitting meditation session after break times. They are also used by



the discipline supervisor to indicate that meditators should sit down after meditation.

When using the wooden blocks to signal the meditators to assembly, one sounds three peals of twenty-four strikes each. Each of the twenty-four strikes evenly increases from slow to fast and decreases from loud to soft.

The Hand Bell

This is a small, bowl-shaped bell that is struck with a thin metal rod. A handle is attached to the inside of the bell at its center so it can be easily held in the hand. The hand bell is used to signal the beginning of the primary sessions, the beginning of meditation practice, the end of meditation practice, and bowing when leaving the hall.





The Meditation Stick

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Used in the Chan School, this sword-shaped wooden stick is used to deliver a warning tap to practitioners who are distracted or sleepy during meditation or who violate the rules of the meditation hall.

The use of the meditation stick does not have a long history within the Chan School and began in the eighteenth century during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing dynasty. The previous national master, Master Yulin, was held in high regard by the emperor. When the emperor had a disciple of Master Yulin's summoned to the court, he asked him about the depth of his meditation. The disciple answered, with great shame, that he had not accomplished much. The emperor was outraged.

"How can it be that the national master for an entire generation can end up with an incompetent successor like you?" the emperor shouted. "I will give you a week's time to realize enlightenment. If you fail to do so within a week, I will kill you with this jeweled sword!"

From then on, an imperial guard would stand outside the meditation hall each day brandishing that same jeweled sword, saying:

"Today is the first day!"
"Today is the second day!"
"Today is the third day!"

The disciple, greatly discouraged, thought his life would soon be over, but on the last day, feverishly practicing while facing his impending death, he attained enlightenment. He then grabbed the sword from out of the guard's hands and sought out the emperor. Finding the emperor, the disciple said, "When all is said and done, is it you who wants my head or I who want your head?"

Hearing such words made the emperor very happy, for who would dare say such things if he were not enlightened? Because of this story, various Buddhist temples began using a wooden meditation stick as a way to spurn on meditators.

The bell and wooden board direct the affairs of the monastic community. The periods of practice and

rest throughout the day are completely determined by their commands. Thus, those who are given the responsibility of sounding the bell and wooden board should scrupulously fulfill their duties to the utmost and sound the bell and board as required. They are sounded when signaled by the discipline supervisor and should never be sounded without authorization.

Whenever the bell and wooden board are sounded, they should not be done so in a way that is too faint or lifeless, nor should they be sounded in a rash and discordant manner that is harsh to the ear and disturbing to others. Sounding the bell and wooden board properly can aid the meditators, allowing them to focus, be mindful, and persevere in their spiritual cultivation by bringing together all positive causes and conditions; on the other hand, sounding the bell and wooden board poorly can disturb the practitioners' thoughts and lead them away from wisdom. One must be very careful.

VI. Proper Conduct within the Meditation Hall

The *Mencius* states, "Without a compass and square, one cannot make circles and rectangles." In the same way, the meditation hall has certain rules that serve as the compass and square to create the conditions for spiritual cultivation and help meditators attain enlightenment. A simplified set of these rules is presented below:

- Do not slander the Buddha, Dharma, or Sangha.
- Do not denigrate your fellow practitioners or do anything to disrupt the fellowship of the meditation hall.
- Do nothing in the meditation hall that would constitute breaking the law.
- Do not make pronouncements about your own accomplishments.
- Do not bring snacks or refreshments into the meditation hall in order to keep it clean and tidy.
- Times for practice and breaks are signaled by the bell and wooden board. Do not leave without being signaled, and do not be late in returning to the meditation hall.
- Enter and exit the meditation hall in an orderly fashion. Do not step out of line or cross in front of the Buddha statue in the center of the meditation hall.
- After entering the meditation hall, one should focus on practice. Do not create distractions by wandering about, scraping your feet, engaging in idle gossip, mobile phone use, or making any noise that may disturb others.
- Within the meditation hall, the monastics on duty should be addressed as

"venerable," and senior monastics should be addressed as "senior Chan practitioner." When asking a question, join your palms and refer to yourself as "student" before asking. Do not use pronouns like "I" or "you." When talking to someone who is standing, you should also be standing; to sit or lean while talking is disrespectful.

- Once the sleeping and seating arrangements have been made, they are not to be changed.
- During walking meditation, remain equally between the person in front of you and the person behind you. Do not move about wildly.
- During sitting meditation, you should commit to contemplating and investigating the mind. Sit up straight. Do not move, lean against a wall, stick out your legs, look around, or grimace. If there is something urgent you must attend to, notify those on duty.
- If you are distracted and receive a stroke from the meditation stick, receive it gracefully. If the distraction continues, meditate while standing. If after three warning strokes the distraction continues, you should willingly meditate while kneeling before a Buddha statue.

- Try to avoid being absent for any meditation sessions. If you are unable to participate for some reason, ask for leave in advance. Persons who are absent from three sessions or more will be asked to leave the retreat.
- Do not receive visitors during a meditation retreat, as this will impede your spiritual work. If it is unavoidable, you should explain such matters to those on duty.
- If you are feeling unwell, before the meditation session begins, ask the discipline supervisor if you may leave. Be sure to report to the discipline supervisor when you are ready to return. For serious illnesses, you should formally report to those on duty that you wish to withdraw to convalesce.
- Keep in mind that the meditation hall and its facilities were built through the generosity of devout believers, and use them with care.

There is so much we can gain through meditation. Once, there was a tofu seller who brought his tofu to the Buddhist temple. Upon seeing the monastics sitting in meditation with such dignity, he spontaneously felt a deep sense of respect and decided he wanted to try meditating as well. He asked the

discipline supervisor if he could participate as a beginner and entered the hall. After entering the meditation hall, he set aside all his distracting thoughts and sat in meditation with full concentration. After the session was over, he spoke up jubilantly as if he had obtained some great treasure:

> I finally remembered! Li Dayong still hasn't paid me back the three dollars he owes me from five years ago!

The tofu seller was able to gain something after only sitting in meditation for a little while, so there is no telling how much more wisdom will manifest for those who enter deep meditative concentration. In the early stages, sitting meditation should make the body feel calm and comfortable, while the mind becomes pliant and grounded. As one's commitment deepens, one can reach a point when the body, mind, and world are forgotten, and the road to enlightenment naturally opens of its own accord. As long as we put forth effort during meditation, the ripples of the mind will become still, and we will be able to see the reflection of the brilliant, bright moon emerge. As our chaotic and scattered thoughts subside, our intrinsic nature, so bright and clear, will naturally manifest itself.

VII. Great Meditation Masters

Meditation is what allows us to manifest our true Buddha nature. For this reason, it has been a major

practice held in common by all the various schools and sects of Buddhism since the beginning. During the Buddha's lifetime, meditation was already widely popular throughout India's philosophical circles. For example, of the six philosophical schools of Brahmanism, both the Yoga and Samkhya schools emphasized meditation to an extraordinary degree.

Prior to attaining enlightenment, the Buddha himself underwent six years of meditation training before he entered the supreme meditative concentration of enlightenment underneath the bodhi tree. He became enlightened to dependent origination as he watched the stars at night. This is why the Buddha's enlightenment has such a close relationship with sitting meditation. Sitting meditation is an essential practice for realizing a direct and thorough perception of our inherent Buddha nature.

After the Chan Patriarch Bodhidharma (d. 535 CE) came to China, he once sat alone atop Mount Song facing a wall for nine years. Bodhidharma spent his entire life sitting quietly in meditation, and from his determined efforts, he was able to thoroughly savor the true taste and essence of meditation. He went on to spread the nectar of Chan meditation throughout China. During the Song dynasty, Chan Master Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157 CE) celebrated Bodhidharma with the following verse:

Sitting alone in meditation at Shaolin Temple,
He fully explained Chan's true meaning with his silence.

Having been greatly influenced by teachings on meditation, Chan Master Tiantong Rujing (1163–1228 CE) of the Song dynasty expended all his effort to promote sitting meditation. He was the first to put forward the concept of "just sitting meditation."[6] Japan's Zen Master Dogen (1200–1253 CE) learned about meditation from Rujing and transplanted the idea back to his homeland by creating the Soto School of Zen Buddhism.

Around that time, Chan Master Hongzhi (1091–1157 CE) promoted the idea of "silent illumination meditation" (*mozhao chan* in Chinese), which emphasized sitting meditation to gain direct insight into one's intrinsic nature and thus see the source of all phenomena.

Since the time of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng (638–713 CE), Chinese Chan meditation has always emphasized the realization of inherent nature; due to individuals like Rujing and Hongzhi, it was transformed into a practice where physical effort was applied to the body. As a result, sitting meditation

6. *Zhiguan dazuo* (只管打坐) in Chinese, *shikantaza* in Japanese.

became a practical method for entering the Way in the Chan School.

This emphasis upon meditation is not limited to Buddhism alone. For example, in daily life, we encourage people to calm down, for no one can consider problems well until the mind is calm. The ability to remain calm and collected represents a degree of meditative mastery. The Confucian text *The Great Learning* states:

> The way of great learning lies in manifesting bright virtue, loving the people, and abiding in the highest good. Only after knowing what to abide in can one be calm; only after being calm can one be still; only after being still can one be at peace; only after being at peace can one deliberate; and only after deliberation can one attain success.

The Confucian philosopher Xunzi (fl. 298–238 BCE) also believed that the highest state of human experience was to attain the tranquility of being "empty, unified, and still." From such examples, we can see that stilling thoughts is an important practice for living our lives that is shared by many traditions, not just Buddhism.