

Meditation manual

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By Reverend Noble Silence Sakya

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Preface

Meditation is a very important practice to calm the mind, learn to concentrate and be aware of everything that happens in our body, mind and in our world. It is a technique that has been taught for thousands of years and is a great gift, because it brings a lot of peace, love and tranquility.

Meditation has changed my life and helped me see the world as it really is. It has helped me understand the impermanence of everything in life, the importance of accepting the good and the bad that happens; I have been able to analyze how we are all equal and we need each other.

In this manual, my dear brother, the venerable monk Noble Silence teaches us many important details about meditation. He has done it very carefully and truthfully. Read it slowly, calmly, so that you can understand and assimilate all the good lessons he has prepared. There are many ways to meditate. Experiment with all of them, so you will know which way you like the best.

May all who read this valuable manual have peace, love and tranquility,

Fernando Camacho

Lay Priest

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Croton on Hudson, New York.

Introduction

This book is intended for people interested in entering the fascinating world of Buddhist meditation and, particularly, in the practice of Zen Buddhism.

In writing this small manual, I relied on the experiences of teachers from different lineages, as well as my own humble experience, acquired during my more than twenty years of daily practice.

In a simple way, we will address the most important aspects in each of the essential steps involved in meditation.

I hope to contribute my little grain of sand to the subject of meditation, which is so popular today not only among scholars of different philosophical schools but, above all, among people who want to live with happiness, harmony and peace of mind.

What is meditation?

Before taking the first steps on the path of meditation, we must understand what meditation means.

According to the Dictionary of the Spanish language of the Royal Spanish Academy, to meditate is to “think carefully and meticulously about something”.

Without a doubt, this is a very wide definition and will not be of great help in trying to understand the term in the light of Zen Buddhism.

So what does it mean to meditate in the context of Buddhism and Zen?

According to the Seeker’s Glossary of Buddhism Buddhist dictionary, the term meditate refers to “an activity in which the person is committed to submitting discursive thoughts, destroying and discouraging unhealthy mental states and initiating and nurturing healthy thoughts.”

To put it more simply, it is a deep journey into our inward to know our own nature, and from there, discover the good and bad seeds that are

sown in the garden of our conscience, in order to leave the last ones asleep and nurture the healthy ones, in a conscious and constant way through daily practice.

What happens in our brain during meditation?

In recent times, science has been very interested in studying all the processes involved in different meditation practices.

Deep studies of the effects of meditation have been carried out both on meditators with years of uninterrupted practice and on people who begin to take their first steps in the world of meditation. Studies have included people motivated by spiritual and religious intentions and people who approach meditation as a therapeutic method.

In all cases, the results have been very interesting.

The results of these investigations agree that our left hemisphere, which is the analytical hemisphere, of logic and the one that processes the notion of time (present, past and future), inhibits its function during the meditation process, when we concentrate in the breath, in a sound, etc. Thus, during that time the right hemisphere predominates,

responsible for creativity, graphic expression, subjective and abstract thinking, which does not record the notion of time (recognizes only the present).

This would explain that, when meditating, the person remains in the present. This allows peace, calm and relaxation to emerge, by temporarily suppressing the worries and frustrations of the past and the uncertainties and doubts of the future. Thus, our mind rests from the continuous coming and going of ideas, memories and sensations.

In addition to all the innumerable psychological and physiological benefits, meditation develops compassion, equanimity and wisdom in a dumbbell called "enlightenment", bringing the human being to the highest that can be aspired on the scale of self-realization.

In different eras of humanity, people with this unusual mental and spiritual state have emerged, often giving rise to spiritual and religious movements that have changed the course of human history, leaving deep traces. Buddha, Christ, Lao Tse ¹, are some examples.

¹ Lao-Tze: "Old Master" considered the creator of *Tao Te Ching*.

Why do different Buddhist practices exist if Buddhism has a single creator?

As is known, the Buddha reached the supreme state of enlightenment through meditation and the practice of full consciousness in his daily life.

Later, when the community of Buddhist monks, *samga*², grew up, Buddha understood that not everyone possessed the ability to concentrate the mind in a state of stillness for a long time, either because of their mental, spiritual or physical problems. Thus, with his immense compassion, he created methods according to each personal case, to help these people.

There is a story about two brothers who came to the *samga* to ask to be ordained as monks. One of them was very intelligent and sagacious, had the ability to remember and memorize many of the texts of the teachings and could stay long hours in meditation.

² Samga : Buddhist community, one of the three jewels.

The other, on the other hand, was slow to learn, could hardly remember the teachings and could barely remain seated to meditate because of his mental state.

Buddha called Shariputra³, one of the most advanced and intelligent disciples of the samga (an arahat⁴), to take charge of this monk's learning. After a few months, Buddha asked Shariputra about the novice's progress, but frustrated Shariputra acknowledged that he felt unable to proceed with the teaching of the new monk. Faced with this situation, Buddha replied that he would personally take charge of instructing him.

In this way, Buddha took the novice under his tutelage.

"I want you to take this broom and sweep this long road (the path that the monks traveled during their practice of walking meditation)," Buddha said. While sweeping out, repeat 'out'; and when you sweep in, repeat 'inward'. But it is important that as long as you do, you put your whole heart and your whole mind based on that practice. "

The novice did not quite understand what he should do and asked again and again for the Enlightened to explain what he had taught him. Buddha, with his immense compassion, repeated the simple practice every time. Finally, after a while, the novice was able to remember it.

³ Shariputra : Main disciple of Buddha, come from a brahmanic family.

⁴ Arahata : "The worthy one" who has achieved the highest level of hinayana, via the supermundane.

The monk worked hard in his work and in being useful to the community. He did his work with such seriousness and attention, putting all his heart, interest and mind in the unusual practice that the Buddha had taught him that, through it, reached a deep state of full-consciousness.

Soon, he gained in concentration, intelligence and skill in practice and became one of the most outstanding disciples in the community.

This story shows that Buddhism is not a rigid or static movement, but, on the contrary, it can incorporate other forms of practice and drinking from other sources, as long as these contribute to the main objective of developing compassion and Wisdom at its best.

Many of these monks taught what the Buddha himself had transmitted to them. For this reason, after the death of the "Great Beloved for the World", different schools emerged with different concepts on how the practice should be.

The first patriarch of Zen Buddhism

One day, Buddha left his cabin to teach his disciples, as usual. But that day the Enlightened One did not mention any word, he only raised a golden flower that he had in his hands.

All the disciples looked bewildered because they did not understand the attitude of the teacher. Only one caught the message of this gesture so full of symbolism and wisdom, the great monk Kasyapa⁵.

This method of profound teaching, which only privileged minds can understand, is known as the Dharma transmitted from mind to mind without uttering a word. Because of this exceptional event, the Great Kasyapa became the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism, a school focused on the inner search and the development of compassion and wisdom through meditation.

⁵ Kasyapa : First Patriarch of Zen Buddhism. He presided over the first council.

The word zen (from Japanese) is derived from the words *dhyana* in Sanskrit or *yana* in Pali, which means to meditate.

This practice spread throughout Asia, adopting different names depending on the country where it was developed, such as *ch'an* in China, *thien* in Vietnam or *seon* in Korea.

It is important to understand that zen does not only mean meditation. Zen has become a way of seeing life through simplicity, aesthetics, mindfulness and, many times, through silence, guiding its practitioners in the difficult art of cutting useless thoughts, focusing on the practice of the present moment, in order to return to our true home, as the Vietnamese master Thich Nhan Hanh⁶ says.

⁶Thich Nhan Hanh : Contemporary Vietnamese zen master, author of numerous books and nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Dr. Martin Luther King.

How Zen Buddhism came to our day

Buddha focused his practice on meditation. Then, the dharma was transmitted through Mahakashyapa, the first patriarch, to Bodhidarma⁷, number twenty-eight in the lineage of the Buddha, and who would take this practice to China in the sixth century AD.

A peculiar anecdote, where mysticism and myth intermingle, tells us that Bodhidarma once arrived at the imperial palace. The emperor was a protector of Buddhism, built temples, fed the monks, helped them with material resources, sent emissaries to India in search of sacred manuscripts, etc.

Once in front of Bodhidarma, the emperor asked the great teacher what his merit was for all the help and protection he provided to Buddhism. Bodhidarma listened to him and replied "no merit."

⁷Bodhidarma : The twelfth patriarch of Zen Buddhism and first in China.

Amazed and disappointed, the emperor repeated his question, and again the teacher answered "none."

This response angered the emperor to such an extent that he decided to kick Bodhidharma from the palace. Unfortunately, the emperor failed to understand Bodhidharma's true message, instead, he became entangled in words and attached to concepts.

Bodhidharma headed towards the mountain of Sung, in the province of Hu-nan, where he meditated for nine years in a cave, founding the famous Shaolin⁸ temple.



⁸ Shaolin: Buddhist temple located on the mountain of Sung, in the province of Hu-nan. Associated with Budhidarma, where the Ch'an (Zen) school started.

It is said that it was he who initiated the practice of martial arts and Qi-gong⁹ within Buddhist temples, since the monks were greatly weakened by the long hours of meditation without exercising their bodies, it was also a way to defend against looters who attacked and robbed temples in search of food and money.

However, who really gave Zen his current face was Hui-Neng¹⁰ (sixth patriarch of Buddhism in China).

It was an illiterate young man who came to a temple asking to be ordered and was placed in the kitchen as an assistant, where he worked for several months.

On one occasion, the abbot of the temple asked the monks to write a poem about their findings, in order to receive the transmission from the abbot. One of the most successful disciples of that temple wrote a verse on the wall that said:

*The body is the Bodhi¹¹ tree,
The heart is like the pedestal of a bright mirror.
Don't stop polishing it eagerly at all times,
So that dust does not accumulate.*

⁹ Qi-gong : Therapeutic-martial-spiritual exercise system where relaxation, visualization and breathing play a fundamental role.

¹⁰ Bodhi : "Awake", wisdom and understanding based on intuition and object-subject unity.

¹¹ Lin-Chi : Also Rinzai, one of the two surviving Zen schools, his practice is based on koan and meditation.

Then, Hui-Neng, demonstrating great sagacity and his mental and spiritual ability, asked a partner to help him write his poem, which said:

*The Bodhi is not a tree,
The bright mirror has no pedestal.
If the Buddha nature is forever pure and clean,
Where is the dust? ...*

The verses evidenced his deep vision and intuition, and allowed him to receive the transmission of the abbot of the temple, which consisted of the bowl used by monks to beg and the sacred mantle (*kasaya*), relics transmitted from the first patriarchs of zen.

Then, Hui-Neng would leave the temple and go south, where he was instructed and ordained as a monk, making great contributions to zen Buddhism in China.

It is in this way, through a long succession of teachers, that zen has come to this day, this wonderful teaching that began with the Buddha and continues with the last monk or practitioner that begins today. Zen experienced a rapid development, which resulted in the emergence of five schools, of which only two survive, Lin-chi¹² (Rinzai) y Ts'ao-tung (Soto)

¹² Ts'ao-tung: Also Soto, one of the two surviving Zen schools, its practice is based on silent meditation or *shikantaza*.

How many types of meditation exist?

Actually, there are many types of meditation. Among the most important within Buddhism are: zen, zen, vi- passana, shamatha y metta. But, in my opinion, they are divided into two large groups: visualization and contemplative.

First, let's look at the definition of each term.

Visualization is the act of awareness of visualizing and mentally developing images of something abstract.

Contemplation (literally means looking away) is the spiritual state that appears in the human being after practicing silence, it is to empty all sensory and mental attention in order to enter the single focus without objective.

In this manual, we will focus primarily on contemplative meditation, although we will also address some visualization practices.

Physical, mental and spiritual benefits of meditation

I consider that the benefits that meditation brings to those who practice regularly and seriously are countless, so I will name only a few of them.

Physical benefits

- Strengthens the immune system
- Stabilizes blood pressure
- Decreases the intensity of physical pain
- Decreases the tension lodged in the body (relieving muscle contracture, headaches, digestive problems and joint discomfort)
- Regulates sleep patterns
- Increases blood serotonin levels (improving the mood)
- Revitalizes physical energy
- Oxygenates and detoxifies the body

Mental benefits

- Improves the ability to concentrate and memory
- Decreases anxiety
- Decrease fears and panic attacks
- Stabilizes emotions, developing clarity and the discernment
- Improves work capacity
- Improves the ability to solve problems
- Helps overcome addictions (as a complement to any recovery program or plan that is being using)
- Decreases worry and negativity

Benefits on the spiritual level

- Reduce prejudices, connecting with our ability to love unconditionally
- Connects us with our instinct
- Increase our creative capacity
- You can give us spontaneous answers to problems or questions
- It allows us to access the feeling of fullness, peace internal and equanimity, which constitute our true nature.
- It helps us align with our life purpose.

Preparing the conditions for meditation

Before starting our practice, we must find a suitable place. Make sure your space has the following basic conditions, essential for meditation:



Cushion, mat and small hand cushion

- good ventilation
- order and cleaning
- enough space for our purpose

In addition, we will need:

- baggy clothes and weather
- a cushion to sit on
- a blanket or mat to not sit directly you on the floor
- a small cushion or small towel folded to place hands.

Correct posture

According to the teachings of the Buddha, we can meditate in any position: sitting, standing, lying or walking. Each of these positions has its advantages and disadvantages.

Standing position has the advantage of allowing us to reach a deep concentration, for example, but it is not stable.

In the lying position we have great stability, but being so comfortable we run the risk of falling asleep easily.

When sitting, we have both the benefits of the previous positions, but not everyone can sit on the floor easily (mainly we Westerners, as it is not our custom). However, if the person has any medical or physical condition that prevents them from sitting on the floor, they can sit in a chair to meditate.

The most suitable positions

SITTING MEDITATION

When meditating sitting on the floor, we need to use a cushion that should not be too flat or too high. The dimensions of the cushion should correspond to the length of our legs. We will sit half the cushion out.

In my experience, the Vietnamese type cushion, which has a not very large diameter and is rather high (see image in the chapter “Preparing the conditions for meditation”), gives good stability and has the advantage that it does not cut the circulation in the area of the buttocks and thighs too much.

Let's look at several positions to meditate sitting on the floor. Some are better than others, in terms of stability and complexity.

1. Tailor or Indian position
2. Burmese position
3. *Siddhasana* position
4. *Seisa* position
5. Half lotus position
6. Full lotus position

1. Tailor or Indian position:

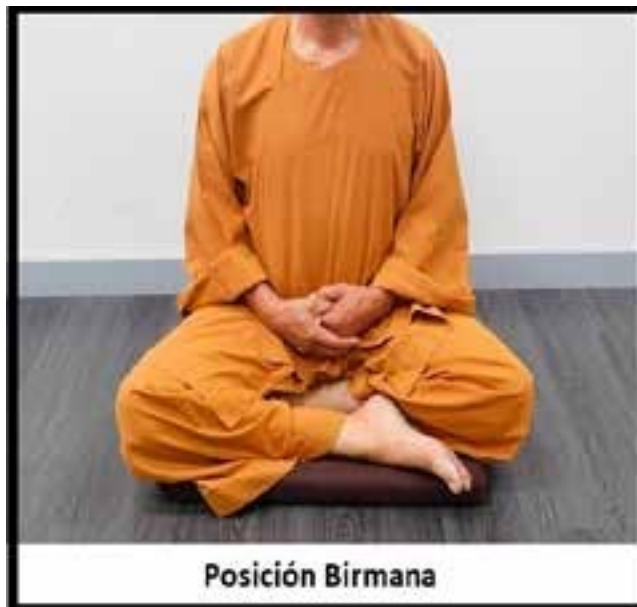
This posture is very simple and easy to do. It is what children usually use to sit on the floor to play. But it has the disadvantage of not offering much stability.



Indian or tailor position

2. Burmese position:

It is also not difficult and resembles the tailor's position, with the difference that one of the legs is placed outside the other, so that they are almost parallel. Both knees must touch the floor and in that lies the complexity of the position.



Burmese position

3. *Siddhasana* position:

This position is widely used in yoga to do the *pranaayamas* (breathing exercise), etc. Here, more elasticity in the knees and hips is required since one foot goes over the calf.



Siddhasana position

4. Seisa position:

This is the position normally used by the Japanese to be in their homes and in the various activities involved in the practice of martial arts. In this posture, the person sits on the feet or more exactly, on their soles, with their knees firmly on the ground. Its drawback is that it requires a lot of resistance and elasticity to stay in it for a long time.



Seisa position (side view)

Seisa position (front view)

5. Half lotus position

This position is much more stable than the previous ones, but it requires greater elasticity. To make the half lotus, we first sit on the ground in the tailor position, then take out the foot that is underneath and place it on the thigh of the other leg. It can be done with either leg.



Middle lotus position

6. *Full lotus position*

This posture does require excellent elasticity in the knees and hips. In addition, it is necessary to have resistance to remain in it for a long time.

It is done as follows: We sit in a tailor or Indian position and place one of our feet on the thigh of the opposite leg, as in the middle lotus. Then, we take out the other foot and place it on the thigh of the other leg, so that the calves form like a cross.

The complete lotus is the mother of all positions for its great stability. Also, keep in mind that part of the blood that momentarily stops circulating in the legs, because of the cross that is formed with the calves, is going to be used in the brain for the action of meditating.



Full lotus position

MEDITATE SITTING ON A CHAIR

Many people cannot sit on a cushion on the floor and remain in that position, even for a short period of time, so they should choose to meditate sitting in a chair.

The way of meditating is the same, that is, we use the same technique as in the previous positions. You must sit on the edge, that is, from the middle forward of the chair, the back as in the other ways must also be straight and without touching the backrest, the feet must be fully supported on the floor, without crossing the legs, hands are placed in the same way as we saw in the previous positions.



Posición en silla

Chair position

How to make our body a strong building

Whenever I talk about the postures to meditate, I like to use the metaphor “of the body as a strong building”, where the legs are the base and our body constitutes the building.

The construction base is fundamental, because if we build a building on a weak base, the building will soon collapse due to the lack of stability and firmness in its foundations. Similarly, position is essential in Zen meditation.

Once we have managed to establish a good base or position with our legs, we must pay attention to the body. The back should be straight, as if it wanted to grow, the lower part of the back sinks slightly forward, which will make our chest rise a little. The shoulders should lower naturally. The head should be straight, without lowering or raising the chin, which should lean slightly inwards. With this movement of the chin, the neck or neck will be straight, as if a thread pulls us up, from the center of the head.

The eyes should remain semi-open (closed can cause drowsiness) and look at an angle of 45 degrees, but without focusing attention on any object on the floor.

Remember that the posture must be firm, with the knees touching the ground.

Once we have built the building, we will proceed to find the center of gravity of it. We put our hands on our thighs and we will swing back and forth, first with a wider angle and then we will decrease the balance or angle until we find the center of our position.

When we have the center of our posture, we proceed to place our hands in the proper position (*mudra*). Note that the position of the hands is equally important to achieve the correct posture.

In zen meditation there are two fundamental positions to place your hands.

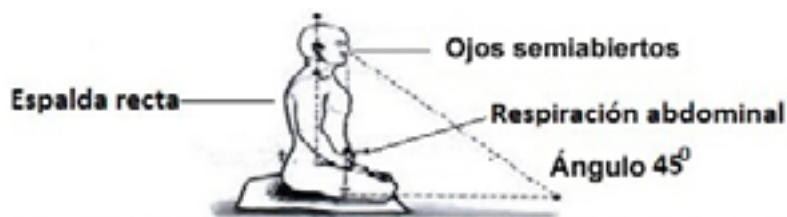
The first, known as the concentration *mudra* or emptiness¹³, consists in putting the right hand on the lap very close to our body, with the palm facing up; then the left hand is placed on the right, also with the palm up. The thumbs should touch lightly; To explain it, many books of zen Buddhism say "without forming valleys or mountains", means that the united ends do not make a pyramid-shaped peak up, nor will they form a kind of hollow.

¹³ Mudra : "Seal or sign", hand or body gestures.

In other words, it should be as if we had an egg between the hands and fingers, if you squeeze it a lot it breaks and if you leave it too loose it could fall and it would also break, so we must achieve just pressure.

In the second position, the spaces between the index and thumb fingers of each hand are intertwined, and one hand embraces the other.

As a summary, keep in mind that the position to meditate combines relaxation with muscle tone. The two extremes are harmful to meditate, so we must always look for the middle ground. The back should not be stooped by the effect of relaxation and gravity, but neither should we be so tense that it produces tension in the body and the mind.



Straight back
Semi-open eyes
abdominal breathing
45 * angle



Mudra of the concentration.

Another mudra to meditate

Techniques to get into zen meditation

We are already in the right position. Now we are going to focus on the inner part, that is, what do we do with our mind and our thoughts?

To begin, we must oxygenate our body by taking deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth about four or five times. Then, we close our mouth and breathe through our nose.

Our goal is to capture or be in the present moment.

It is a very difficult task because, as we know, time is intangible, when we want to think about it, it has passed. The easiest way to achieve this is through physical sensations and what is the most constant and stable physical sensation of the body?: Breathing!

So, let's put our attention on the breath, notice that I don't say concentration but attention.

We will perceive two important sensations: When we inhale, we will feel the freshness of the edges of the nostrils. air coming from outside; when exhaling, we will feel the warmest and wettest air that comes from within.

On the other hand, there are meditators who, instead of observing these two sensations in the nostrils, prefer to observe the movement of their abdomen when breathing.

We will put all our attention trying to capture and distinguish these two sensations. At first we will notice that we manage to keep our attention only for fractions of minutes, since memories, images and physical discomforts, among other distractions, will prevent our attention from being constant.

What to do?

The first thing: Do not make our mind a battlefield. That is to say, we should not fight with our mind at arm's length trying to focus it to the force, this does not give results and we will only get tension and fatigue in the body and mind.

There are several methods to pacify the "monkey" of our mind. There is a simile in the books written by the great Buddhist teachers who say that our mind is like a drunken monkey inside a room, if we want to catch it by force we will see that it will be almost impossible, because the monkey will jump incessantly to prevent it. But if we sit quietly in a corner of the room, the monkey will get tired and stay calm; Then, we will succeed.

Count your breath

Breathing can also help calm the fluctuations of thoughts and calm the mind. How do we do it

When we breathe we say one and when we exhale we say two; we inhale again and count three ... and so on, until we reach number ten. Then, we go back to the beginning and take the exhalation as one and the inhalation as two, and continue until ten, it can also be done from back to front.

In this way we will calm our thoughts. We can repeat this exercise several times but we must be honest and, if we lose count due to lack of attention, we must start from the beginning.

Always remember that it is very important not to judge the thoughts that come to the screen of our mind. We can classify them as pleasant or unpleasant and indifferent or neutral, but we must not judge them. Try to see them as something personal and let them go on their own impulse.

Do not forget that it is we who inject energy into obsessive thoughts.

Deep exhalation

In my experience, the most appropriate way is to put the emphasis on exhalation. The muscles of the abdomen and diaphragm contract through this action and allow residual air to be expelled. This activates the second concentration cycle, which occurs in the center of attention (CA) connected to the reticular bulb of the brain stem in the cervical, which controls muscle tone.

At the time, due to the contractions of the diaphragm and the abdomen, a feedback occurs that causes this second circle of attention to be activated and send sensory signals that are transmitted along the cord to the thalamus and finally to the CA, reinforcing the first that occurs between this (CA) the thalamus and the prefrontal.

This deep and somewhat forced breathing can be done every three or four normal breaths, with special attention at the time the body wishes to inhale again. That is, you will wait with deep attention for the moment you wish to breathe again, consciously observing this whole process

(I recommend reading the book *Zen Training* by Kat-suki Seikeda).

After a while of practice, you will notice that you can concentrate on breathing observation without much difficulty. Thus, we can see what is behind our thoughts in the same way that we can see the bottom of a calm lake.

How to get out of meditation

Follow these instructions to finish the meditation:

1. Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth three times
2. Imagine that with the inhalation it refreshes your entire body and with the exhalation it expels all impurities and diseases
3. Move your shoulders up and down, repeat five times
4. Move your head back and forth, repeat, five times
5. Move your head from left to right, repeat five times
6. Mobilize your fingers by opening and closing your hands
7. Proceed to massage your face, neck and head, repeat five times
8. Use your right hand to massage the left shoulder.
left and left for the right shoulder, repeat five times
9. Use your right hand to massage your chest and stomach; With the back of the left, massage the back and waist at the same time
10. Massage your buttocks and hips

11. Rub your hands until they are hot and delicately massage your eyes; cover them with your warm hands; repeat five times.

12. Now, undo the posture slowly and carefully, stretch your legs

13. Massage your legs, knees and feet (including the back), one at a time

14. Stretch your arms toward your toes by bending your body forward, repeat five times,

15. Now, you can remove the meditation cushion and stand slowly to end your meditation session.

Walking meditation

This type of meditation is widely used in Buddhism and is very popular in the centers of the different traditions where Zen is practiced.

This form of moving meditation is one of those that Buddha recommended to strengthen our full-consciousness. In addition, it helps us to activate the circulation and to stretch the ligaments, joints and tendons that are numb after sitting for a while.

How to practice walking meditation?

After massaging our body, we stand up and join the palms of the hands at chest height. We bow to the front and then our right shoulder points to the center of the circle, in case we meditate in a meditation room with other people.

If we are alone in our house, we intertwine our hands in front of our abdomen, we stand straight and begin to walk slowly and gently, taking a step and supporting the heel of the foot at the same time we inhale.

When exhaling, we move the weight of the body to the front leg; While we support the foot completely, the back foot rests only on the fingers.

When we need to breathe again, we move the foot back and carry it forward, supporting it only on the heel while we inhale again. Thus we repeat the mechanism during the whole session, trying to harmonize the steps with the breath and maintaining full consciousness not only in the breath but in the six senses and in the mind (in Buddhism the mind is considered as a felt more).

In this sequence of steps the four elements are present:

- 1) Fire, when lifting the foot (the fire rises)
- 2) Air, when moved (air moves)
- 3) Water, when lowering it (water drops)
- 4) Earth, when touching the ground with the foot (the earth is solid)



Walking meditation 3-2-1

Shamatha and Vipassana meditation

This meditation is frequent in many Buddhist traditions, mainly the Teravada¹⁴.

In this manual I will discuss the technique I learned at the Bhavana Society Teravada meditation center, led by the famous teacher Mahatera Bhante G, in West Virginia, where I had the opportunity to reside for a year.

In the chapter "Counting the breath" we explain the Shamatha meditation. This is used as a preliminary method to calm the mind and be able to move on to the second phase of Vipassana.

Vippasana is the method of developing full-consciousness, the technique is to put our attention on the senses.

For example, in the ear we will catch all the sounds that come to us, without judging and without getting involved in the thoughts that arise

¹⁴ Teravada: "The ancients", one of the two great branches of Buddhism, is located mainly in South Asia.

from these sounds, but knowing in what category are the sensations or perceptions that they wake up, that is to say if they are pleasant, unpleasant, indifferent or neutral. We will just notice them and let them withdraw of their own accord, we will do nothing to keep them or reject them, we will only notice them. This last one is very important.

We will be like this for as long as we decide, at first it can be a short period of time and then we can extend it.

The next step is to notice the sensations of the body. In the beginning we will notice the thickest ones, such as the contact of our hands with the mudra, the buttocks with the cushion, our knees with the floor, our clothes with the skin, etc. These sensations are very easy to notice, but as we move forward we will notice much more subtle sensations, such as small touches or tickles on the skin, small touches of energy, blood circulation even to the heartbeat, etc.

As in the previous exercise, we will limit ourselves to noticing in which category these sensations are: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Here, the duration will also depend on our permanence in the posture.

Always remember, don't judge the sensations, just notice them and let them go in a natural way.

Then we will proceed with the olfactory sensations, taste and sight, following the same guidelines as described above.

Finally, we will deal with thoughts in the same way we did with auditory, tactile, olfactory and sight sensations. The mind in Buddhism is considered as another sense, therefore, we must work with it in the same way as with those mentioned above.

We will notice the thoughts that enter the screen of our mind without judging or valuing them, we are only going to classify in which category they are: pleasant, unpleasant, different or neutral.

We will observe the impermanent nature of thoughts, that is, we will see how they arise and, by not giving them the energy of reaction and attention, we will verify that they disappear spontaneously. At the beginning, the succession of thoughts will be rapid and as they have more skill in practice, they will become increasingly dispersed, as is the case with breathing.

We will also be attentive to the space that exists between thought and thought, this is a very important part of the exercise.

If, during the practice of any of these techniques, our mind becomes distracted, we can return to the observation of the breath (Shamatha) until it becomes calm again.

In the end we will abandon all purpose of concentration and observation, and our mind will become purposeless or objective, it will only passively perceive everything when it happens inside or outside, that is, we will be in a state of no-mind.

Meditation in the name of Buddha

This practice is very popular in the countries of North Asia, in the great school of Mahayana¹⁵, Great Vehicle and in particular Pure Land.

This school refers to the late sutras¹⁶ of the Buddha and consists in repeating the name of Amitaba Buddha (Buddha of the Eternal Light) in order to be reborn in the paradise of the West or in a place where the conditions for practice are favorable, to conclude the practice not completed here (for more information read Amitaba Sutra).

For this practice it is necessary to have faith in the Amitaba Buddha (Tariki or appeal to the other force) and in that sense it resembles Christianity a bit.

¹⁵ Mahayana: "The Great Vehicle," one of the two great branches of Buddhism, is located primarily in North Asia..

¹⁶ Sutra: Literally, a string where beads are strung. They are the speeches of Buddha in the forty years of his ministry.

There are many versions of this school, and the one that comes closest to the practice of Ch'an (Zen) is the one that is done by combining the breath with the repetition of the mantra, knowing that the Pure Land is within us, here and now, without having to wait to die to be in that magnificent place.

As many writings of the masters say: "The Pure Land is as far away as the last corner of the universe and as close as a thought." This practice is very simple and does not require any special techniques.

We sit in the meditation posture following all the previous explanations and, after practicing Samatha meditation (calming the mind), we begin to repeat the formula "Namo Amitaba Buddha", which means Homage to the Buddha of infinite or eternal light .

We are going to do this by harmonizing each breath with each syllable. When we inhale we say "Na"; when we exhale, we say "MO"; we inhale again and say "A"; let's talk "Ta"; we inhale "Ba" and so on; putting all our attention on this formula.

The most important thing is to develop maximum full consciousness in the repetition of this mantra and in the faith of being reborn in the Pure Land. We do not need to guess or speculate with this repetition; if our concentration goes away, we go back to the breath to fix it in the physical part that is in the movement of the abdomen or in the area of the nose.

We can also practice it anytime we are doing an activity that does not require much concentration. We can use a Buddhist *mala* or rosary to help.

Many Zen teachers use this formula as a koan¹⁷. After repeating it, they wonder who is repeating this formula? The answer must come out of the source of intuition.

¹⁷ Koan: Literally means "public case." These are statements and riddles that the Zen master gives the disciple to develop his intuition and wisdom.

Meditation in Benevolent Love (Metta)

This meditation, of the visualization type, is more common in the Theravada tradition, although in Mahayana it is also quite popular. It consists in choosing several people who will be the objective of our practice.

The word "*metta*" in Sanskrit or Pali means Benevolent Love. The "*mettas*" are:

1. *Metta* ourselves
2. *Metta* towards a good friend
3. *Metta* towards an indifferent person
4. *Metta* towards a difficult person
5. *Metta* towards all beings

Metta to ourselves: We start with ourselves because it is impossible to give something we don't have. We must develop *Metta* first, before we can feel it for other people. Therefore, we must be cured of hate, resentment and umbrage and then send benevolent love to others.

It is important to have compassion with ourselves, be kind and tolerant of our faults, and accept our mistakes, not forgetting that we must work on them to rectify them and improve as human beings.

For practice, we will sit in the meditation posture of our preference, in the place where we usually perform our spiritual practices or in any quiet place. We can repeat this little formula to achieve this goal:

May I be free from anger!

May I be free from enmity!

May I be free from suffering!

May I be full of happiness!

Metta towards a good friend: We choose one or several people that we truly love and appreciate, we visualize that from our hearts comes a golden ray of *Metta*, or benevolent love, which covers these people providing them with peace, love and happiness.

Going towards an indifferent person: We choose one or several people we know by sight, but without sharing a close friendship with them. For example, people we meet on the street, in a cafeteria or in the workplace, etc. We visualize these people (s) together with the one (s) we love, and we wrap them with the same ray of benevolent love, without any difference.

Metta towards a difficult person: We choose one or several people of a difficult nature, which causes us to be in discomfort in our lives or that in some way we do not like because of their habits (WARNING: If our goal is not strong enough, we must take care of not choosing someone who has done us a very serious harm, because we can feel a lot of resentment when thinking about that person). Then, we visualize that we send them the same golden ray, wrapping them together with the people we previously visualized, with love, compassion, tolerance and peace (*metta*), without making any difference between them.

Metta toward all beings: Now, we extend this golden ray of benevolent love to all people. First, those near our home, including family, friends, near and distant neighbors. Then, we extend it to our city, county or province, state, country, continent and to the entire globe, our galaxy and distant galaxies, and finally, to the entire universe with all its living and non-living beings.

Silent meditation

This type of meditation is apparently easy, since it does not require any kind of technique. Sitting properly, as we saw at the beginning, we just have to observe the thoughts, doing nothing. It is not necessary to try to stabilize the breath or follow other indications, except to observe the mind and let the thoughts pass. Emphasis is also placed on exhalation.

You must be very alert not to get carried away by the chain of thoughts or fall into daydream or daytime sleep. Personally, I prefer to do it after I establish myself in full-consciousness and observe my thoughts in an impersonal way without intervening or judging.

Deep states of mind

After a while after a constant practice, we can experience the states of mind that occur when entering a meditative absorption, where thoughts become more dispersed, peace emerges and happiness is experienced.

In different traditions they are called in different ways: *samadhi*, *satori*, *kensho*, etc.

But, CAREFUL, we should not stick to these states of mind, for they are impermanent. As with the other mental formations, we must observe them and let them pass.

During what time and how often should we meditate?

These are questions that are not lacking in the lectures on meditation. Actually, there is no definitive answer to these questions. It depends on physical conditions, time, age, our interest, etc.

The ideal frequency is twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. If it is not possible, then, at least once a day, to have good results. In the case of those people who do not have time, they should practice it when they can, because something is always better than nothing.

Of course, I will say that one must push: If you start with ten or fifteen minutes, you must periodically increase the time, it is about practicing with diligence and will, always remembering that the effort should be made with common sense. I have seen people who have been taken out of ambulance retreats for lack of prudence and for trying to go beyond their limits. This is especially important for beginners, because after an experience like that they can leave the practice.

Breathing during meditation

The human being can spend days without eating, even without drinking water, but can not stop breathing for more than three or four minutes. This shows us that breathing is the most important source of food for the body.

Breathing is vital for most living things, however, we do not pay much attention to the way we perform this important activity. We spend our whole lives breathing, barely noticing how we do it.

Traditional Chinese medicine considers that the human being has two types of vital energy, a “previous sky” call, which we receive because of the genetics of our parents, and the other “back sky”, which is the energy that we acquire through food and breathing. This explains the importance of breathing to maintain a vital and healthy life.

There are four types of breathing:

1. High breathing
2. Medium breathing
3. Low breathing
4. Full breath

Our lungs are like bags that begin to fill from top to bottom. Most people breathe only with the upper part of the lungs, without using the lower part. As is known, the organs that are not used are clogged, so it is common to see that the lower part of the lungs in people who do not breathe well is stunted and disused.

It is very important to learn to breathe correctly with the help of a specialist in *pranayama* (yoga breathing).

In this manual we are going to focus specifically on how to breathe when we are meditating. For meditation we must practice breathing number three or low breathing.

Why is low breathing the most appropriate for meditation?

First, I want to mention that the main function of the cushion in meditation is to release the area of the lower *dantien* or center of gravity, which is three inches below the navel, since sitting on a cushion the knees will be below this point, thus facilitating deep or diaphragmatic breathing.

Second, as I explained in the “Deep Exhalation” chapter, the contraction of this area helps strengthen concentration. As we know, in the large and small intestines there is a type of neuron, in addition to many nerve endings; This type of breathing massages that area, being very beneficial for health and helping us reach deeper states of consciousness.

The *Qi-Gong* technique

You may wonder what does *Qi-Gong* have to do with meditation? Before answering, I want to explain very briefly the meaning of this word.

Qi means vital energy that moves and penetrates everything, which is to work, move, etc. So *Qi-Gong* means to work or move the vital energy.

The *Qi-Gong* itself is a moving meditation. When we practice this medical-spiritual-healing technique, it is necessary to breathe correctly, visualize the energy or movement we perform and be in full consciousness. In addition, to achieve good results, the relaxation.

As you can see, it implies almost the same as when we meditate in a static way.

In my own experience, I can say that it is a very good complement for those who have a serious intention in the practice of meditation, because it is the active part of it. It allows us to develop full consciousness in the movement, in addition, it helps us improve our physical condition and consequently, health.

Always remember that mind and body are not two different things, so when we touch or affect one, the other will also be affected. There can be no clean water in a dirty glass.

Relaxation in the lying position

The relaxation in the lying position on the back is very useful after a hard exercise or a hard day of work, but I do not recommend it to meditate because it is very easy to fall asleep due to the comfortable position and because the body responds with sleep, being accustomed to resting in that way. But sleeping is not meditating.

However, if the person must remain in bed due to illness or during a period of convalescence that prevents him from sitting in a chair, much less on the floor, he can meditate in this position, without interrupting his practice.

There are several ways or techniques to practice relaxation. In this manual we will address only one of them.

We lie on a comfortable and firm surface, it should not be too cushioned or too hard. The place must be silent, with an adequate temperature and without much light, that is, in darkness.

We put the palms of the hands up and do not cross the legs. Now, we begin to visualize our body from the feet up:

1. We visualize the toes, we can find them and then relax them.
2. Next, we do the same thing with our feet, we contract them and relax them.
3. We continue up, going part by part all our body to the head. We must pay special attention to the muscles of the face, because by relaxing these we help to relax the rest of the body.
4. Then, we begin to visualize, or rather to feel, that our body becomes heavy, very heavy, and we have the feeling that it sinks into the ground. When we get that feeling, we will feel that we are losing weight and become as light as a cloud, we can even give it any color, we can think that we become a blue cloud that begins to rise more and more until we can look at the roofs of the houses, the cars, the avenues, etc.
5. In this high place, the wind begins to take us out of the city slowly; We begin to see the rural part of our state or province, cultivated fields, animals, hills and mountains, etc. There we enjoy this beautiful landscape, but our route is not over yet and the wind again takes us away, leading us towards the sea or the beach.

From our place we will begin to see the sand, the white crests of the waves, we can even smell the saltpeter in the air. But our journey does not stop, but it continues offshore and we can see how the coast is moving away more and more, the light blue of the waters disappears, giving way to an intense and dark blue, we no longer see the coast, only the clouds and seagulls revolve around us. We feel a great silence, deep and restful. We can stay there for as long as we want, plunged into ourselves in peace and with deep relaxation.

6. To get out of this state, we begin to visualize ourselves from head to toe, trying to put energy of movement and action in each part of our body, following an opposite direction to the beginning.

If you find it difficult to remember all these steps you can record them beforehand and listen to them when doing the exercise.

Mindfulness in daily life

Mindfulness is a fundamental part of our practice. It is the complement of the sustained observation that one wants to achieve in the motionless type meditation or in the sitting position.

On the other hand, in addition to being a practice, achieving full awareness is our main objective. We aspire to be alert as long as possible, that is, we must remain awake, not in the daytime sleep in which we spend most of the time. The word Buddha means just that, being awake to reality, living in the here and now.

I would say that this is the biggest challenge. We can achieve a certain skill in meditation in a more or less short time, but being attentive and without worries about the future or without regretting and frustrating ourselves about the past is difficult.

Many of the people we meditate have ever experienced this: We sit to meditate, we have a perfect practice, achieving deep peace and well-being.

We believe that we have touched the feet of the Buddha, that we are in Nirvana, but when we get up, someone tells us something we did not like or a driver makes a reckless maneuver and we react abruptly and unconsciously and even anger arises, then we ask ourselves Where did the peace I was feeling just a few hours ago go?

Perhaps it is because our static meditation has improved a little, but we have not taken it out of the cushion, to everyday life.

Many stories of Zen masters show that this is the most important part and they teach us that Zen is everyday life, with its small details and its most banal labors.

In countries like Japan, China or Vietnam they have brought full awareness to activities such as music, floral arrangement, martial arts, tea, etc.

According to a Zen story, a novice monk tells his teacher: "Master, finally, when are you going to teach me the mysteries of Dharma, the mysteries of Zen?" To which the teacher responds: "Go and wash your bowl" (utensil used by monks to ask for food and drink).

In this way, the teacher teaches him that a gesture as simple and banal as washing a kitchen utensil, going to the bathroom, sweeping, etc. It can help us to develop our full awareness.

The great Buddhist master and monk, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Thich Nhat Hanh, recommends many of these full-awareness practices in daily life, even in the modernity in which we live.

For example, he recommends breathing three times when the phone rings and observing carefully, without reacting unintentionally conscious when answering.

Be deeply attentive to the change of light, when we are in front of the red light of the traffic light, without using the phone or chatting with another passenger. Stay fully alert when washing dishes, feeling the water in our hands, perceiving the smell of soap and without wasting water unnecessarily. When we drink tea or coffee we can also take advantage and practice full-awareness, perceiving its aroma, feeling the first sip of the contact of the drink with the lips.

These are just some recommendations. It is up to each of us to take this wonderful practice to more and more activities of our daily work. Mindfulness will give us inner peace and happiness and avoid many accidents and mistakes in our lives.

Sutras in which Buddha talks about meditation and mindfulness

In the *Anapanasati and Satipatana sutras*, Buddha spoke primarily of mindfulness and meditation.

For obvious reasons, in this modest work I cannot explain in depth this great teaching coming from the Enlightened One, I recommend consulting the specialized books on these topics if you are interested in knowing more.

Anapanasati Sutra

In Pali, "*anapanasati*" means full-awareness in the breath. And that was precisely what Buddha did under the tree of meditation, for ninety days.

Anapanasati is the observation of inhalation and exhalation. Buddha said: "If your inhalation is short, you should know that it is short. If the exhalation is short, you should know that it is short. If the inhalation is long, you should know that it is long. If the exhalation is long, you should know that it is long. "

With this simple reminder, Buddha wants to lead us to "realize" how important the breath is in the practice of mindfulness.

Satipatana Sutra (the four foundations of consciousness)

These are:

1. Watchful body care
2. Watchful attention to sensations
3. Mindfulness
4. Attention on objects of the mind or *Darma*¹⁸

The attention in the body refers to being attentive to the breath, the four elements (fire, air, earth and water) that make up the body, the five senses and their organs, the position of the body and its actions, etc.

Attention to sensations refers to being attentive to the three classifications of sensations: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. In this way, we see how they arise and disappear, and we understand their impermanence.

The attention in the mind points to all the mental formations that arise and will be recognized as emotions: anger, joy, illusion, concentration, liberation, etc.

The attention on the objects of the mind refers to the five *skandas* or aggregates of the mind (body, sensations, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness), the factors that can obstruct understanding and liberation, and the four noble truths regarding suffering.

¹⁸ Darma: Universal laws discovered by Buddha. Doctrine of Buddha All conditioned objects existing in the universe.

The practitioner is fully aware of the sensations (pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent or neutral), is alert as they arise, settle and disappear, and is aware that they have a psychological or physiological basis.

Compassion, wisdom and equanimity

Many times, when the stimuli are pleasant, the unconscious reaction of attachment arises, in the same way, when the stimuli are unpleasant, the unconscious reaction of rejection arises. When there is no interest in the stimulus, indifference arises.

On the other hand, in an enlightened mind the reactions are the result of the process of observation and full awareness, not of emotions, or of unconscious reactions. The reactions of enlightened minds arise from wisdom, compassion and equanimity.

Before a pleasant stimulus, one can respond with a conscious reaction of detachment-equanimity. (Note that detachment does not mean rejection.)

When the stimulus is unpleasant, we must respond with compassion-equanimity, and when it is indifferent it responds with equanimity-compassion-wisdom.

These three important factors must always be combined.

Pity, an emotion that arises from fear, is replaced by compassion, an energy that brings with it the will to help. Wisdom lets us know how to help and equanimity gives us enough mental clarity not to be disturbed by the action.

Many people confuse Buddhist equanimity with coldness or indifference (the neutral), but it is a mistake, indifference lacks attention, full-consciousness, compassion and wisdom, because the individual does not care about the stimulus, has no interest for him and, therefore, there is no reaction.

On the other hand, equanimity is endowed with full-consciousness and yes, there is a reaction, out of analysis, of wisdom and compassion. As *Paramahansa Yogananda* said: "Actively calm, calmly active."

Exercises that help maintain the correct posture

There are exercises that can help us with posture. Elasticity and resistance in posture are two important factors for our meditation to be successful, from the point of view of its duration.

If the position is easy for us and we are able to hold it for longer, we can take better care of the work with breathing, although attention in the posture is also important and is part of the same practice, I mean keeping your back straight, relaxed shoulders, straight head, etc. Even when we do not perceive any discomfort, it is part of the sustained attention.

Next, I will refer to some exercises that can help us increase elasticity and endurance, allowing us to achieve success in our purpose:

1. Initial position: Sitting with legs extended.



Initial position

2. Half butterfly position : Bend one of the feet over the opposite thigh, as high as possible, and try to make the knee touch the ground, with one hand gently press to avoid a knee injury. Do it with both legs.



Half butterfly

3. Butterfly position: After making the half butterfly with both feet, bend both legs and join the soles of the feet. I do not recommend moving your legs from top to bottom as if they were two wings, but with both hands push both knees very gently to try to reach as low as possible.



Butterfly position

4. Half butterfly position with forward flexion: Perform the half butterfly as in point 2, but now flex the body forward, grasping the ankle of the extended foot and trying to lower as much as possible. Again I want to insist that these movements should be done "very smoothly". Keep in mind that an injury would force you to leave the practice for weeks and even months.



Half butterfly position with forward flexion

Pain and obstacles during meditation

As we all know, pain is one of the strongest and most annoying sensations that living beings experience, and it can represent a great obstacle when performing any activity. Meditation does not escape this reality either.

The first thing we should do is recognize the nature of the pain. If it is caused by an injury or physical condition, we should consult a doctor. If the cause of pain is the lack of habit in the posture, then we should do elasticity exercises and practice daily and with constancy.

If during the meditation we feel pain in the knees, back or any other part of the body, we must leave the posture in a conscious way and without making sudden movements. This is particularly important when we meditate in groups, so as not to disturb the people around us. Then, we can massage the knees, the back or the affected part, always avoiding making noises.

Pain should also be observed as an object of meditation. without trying to

push it out or calm it with the mind. We are only going to observe it as much as possible and, then, we will discover interesting edges in this sensation. Remember that pain is another mental formation, such as cold, heat or anger.

Buddhism also refers to psychological obstacles, known as the five obstacles of meditation, which also make introspection difficult and painful, these are:

1. Lust and greed
2. Dislike and hate
3. Laziness, drowsiness and dullness
4. Restlessness, remorse
5. Anxiety, dispersion and doubt

Summary

I hope this little manual will be useful especially for people who begin in meditation and serve as a theoretical and practical guide.

My goal was to capture my experiences as a meditator, along with the knowledge that I have learned directly from my teacher Thich Tri Hoang and the experiences of other meditators and teachers from different traditions and eras that I have studied.

I honestly believe that it is important to listen and apply the experiences of other people, especially those of those we believe can help us. But we must try by all means to have our own experiences, since meditation, and especially zen, is strictly practical, although the theory is also necessary as an initial guide, otherwise we would be lost and without understanding what we are doing.

Currently, there is a lot of information in books and on the internet, I consider this a great advantage and at the same time a big problem, because with so much information it is difficult to discern which is useful and which is not.

If you want to deepen our true nature and feel the imperative need to improve as a human being, I recommend you seek a living guide, that is, a teacher who practices and has the necessary experience to guide you.

The teacher does not have to be a Buddha, but he must be a person with years of experience in the activity. Your example must state with certainty that you are trying to put into practice what you preach. Be careful, do not get carried away by the clothes, by appearances, or by races. Pay attention only to how that person behaves in your life.

On the other hand, do not seek to see absolute perfection, because teachers are also human beings. Always remember that the most important thing is sincerity and honesty in practice and in life in general.

Too often I have heard the zen saying: "zen meditation is useless." And it is true, although I would add: "It is useless and at the same time it serves everything."

Great masters strive for the disciple to kill all his false expectations and stop pursuing results that are often far from reality. In this way, they can concentrate on practice and remember that the goal is the path itself.

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Biographical Review

Reverend Noble Silencio Sakya was born in Havana, Cuba, on September 5, 1953. As a child he grew up in a family and loving environment with his five brothers, all of them older than him. Although his family was not especially religious, his parents were very honest, caring and hardworking people and instilled these values in their children.

From a young age, Noble Silencio Sakya was interested in Eastern religions and philosophies. When he was barely nine or ten years old, he saw in a magazine the photo of a Buddhist monk in Calcutta, who only had a few objects: an umbrella, a razor blade and a bowl to beg for food. This image impressed him strongly and was etched in his mind.

A few years later, he began practicing karate with his friend and teacher Rubén Delgado. Through that friendship, he met "Old Ruben", as they affectionately called his friend's father.

Old Ruben was a Mason, practiced yoga and had a vast library with many books on Eastern and esoteric philosophy. Under his influence, the young Jorge, his birth name, began in the spiritual search, had access to Rubén's library and had long talks with him about the subjects he was passionate about.

His philosophical concerns were growing and, also, his quest to find the answers to so many questions.

In the 80s, that search takes him to the Self-Realization Fellowship, the yoga school founded by Paramahansa Yogananda, which surprisingly had a headquarters in Havana. It should be remembered that, at that time, religious practice was prohibited in Cuba and the Cuban government had closed most religious centers and institutions.

In Self-Realization Fellowship he began his spiritual practice in a more serious way. He studied the lessons of this school and began in the practice of meditation.

Years later, a book about Japanese Zen Buddhism came into his hands and thus had his first encounter with Buddhism.

In 1993 he settled in the United States.

His philosophical concerns and his spiritual search led him to study different traditions, including Zen Buddhism of the Vietnamese tradition. This was a momentous moment in his life, because it was in this school where he finally found his teacher, the Venerable Thich Tri Hoang, a Zen Buddhist monk of Vietnamese origin.

On May 28, 1999, at the Hai An Pagoda Temple in New Britain, Connecticut, his master ordered him as a Buddhist monk from the forty-fourth generation of the Lan Te or Rinzai school of Vietnamese Buddhism.

He studied Dharma in the first course of Dharma Teacher Order, under the tutelage of the Venerable Tri Hoang, founder of the order.

He has worked and lived in different temples in the United States; among them, Bhavana Society, in West Virginia, and Chiu Kien, in New York. He currently lives in Miami, Florida, in the Vietnamese Temple Phuonc Hue.

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