

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DO PURE MEDITATION.

Translated from the Chinese of the Fifty-fourth Ancestor,
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Pure meditation opens us so that we may directly realize the Foundation of our minds and dwell content within our own Buddha Nature. This is called 'displaying our Original Face'. It is also called 'revealing the landscape of our Original Nature'. Body and mind both drop off, with no clinging to sitting up or lying down. Hence, there are no discriminatory thoughts of 'this is good' or 'this is bad'. You readily go beyond thoughts of 'this is worldly' or 'this is saintly'. You penetrate into, and go on beyond, the multitude of notions and theories about delusion versus enlightenment. You leave far behind the boundary between 'ordinary beings' and 'Buddhas'. Therefore, you cease to pant after the myriad phenomena and let go of all attachments to them.

All willful actions have ceased; the six sense faculties are not actively pursuing what things are, unsure of what to call them. No need to activate body, no need to activate mind. Should you wish to deliberate, you find that deliberative thought has died out; should you wish to speak, you find that you are destitute of words. You are like the fool and like the one who is resolute; you are as lofty as a mountain and as profound as the ocean, with the peak beyond view, the bottom beyond sight. Without comparing conditions, you illumine them, your Eye shining out from the clouds. Without pondering on anything, you penetrate all; your teaching is clear as you speak out from the silence.

Whilst sitting in pure meditation, cut yourself free of Heaven and Earth: your whole being is as a solitary drop of dew. Those whose spiritual realization is unfathomable in its depth are as great corpses: their eyes have no veil, no cataract; their feet never contact even a single mote of dust, for where is there any dust? What is there to obscure or hinder? By its very nature, clear water has no front or back; in the last analysis, the empty sky has no inside or outside. Like them, you are unobscured and clear, luminous in yourself, spiritually ablaze, for form and space are not yet divided, so how are knowledge and the wisdom that contemplates it to arise? From the beginning, they have dwelt together for successive eons without a name.

The Great Master who was our Third Ancestor called It 'Mind', meaning 'Original Nature'. The Venerable Nagarjuna, as an expedient, called It 'Body', meaning 'True Self'. The former points to the aspect of Buddha Nature, whilst the latter expresses the embodiment of the Buddhas. As 'the Full Moon', It reveals no lack or excess. This Original Nature is none other than Buddha. The radiance of the True Self arises from the ancient past and is dazzling in Its brilliance today. It effects the transmutations of Nagarjuna and perfects the samadhi of Buddhas.

Our minds, from the first, have no dual nature and our bodies differ in appearance. There is just mind and just body; do not speak of them as being different or as being alike. Mind shifts and perfects body; body manifests and its appearance diverges. A single wave moves ever so little, and myriad waves come following after. No sooner have mind and perceptual consciousness arisen than myriads of phenomena compete to come in. Thereupon, what we call 'the four elements and the five skandhas' harmoniously combine, and the 'four bodily segments and their five sense organs' suddenly emerge, culminating in the thirty-six physical parts and excretions, along with

the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination. Our features, ever changing and shifting, roll on in succession, inheriting from what has gone before. Still, combining with all phenomena, they have ‘existence’. Hence, the mind is like the ocean’s water, the body like its billowing waves. Just as there is no trace of a wave outside the ocean’s water, so there is not a single drop of water outside of, or apart from, the billowing waves. Water and wave have no separate existence; movement and rest are no different. Hence, it is said that the True Person of ‘birth and death, coming and going’, the Indestructible Body of the four elements and the five skandhas, is the One who now sits in meditation, who straightway enters the ocean of Buddha Nature and accordingly manifests the embodiment of the Buddhas.

From the first, the wondrous, pure, bright Original Nature immediately appears before one’s eyes. One light continuing from the first ultimately becomes fully illuminating. The waters of the ocean are all without increase or decrease. Likewise, the waves and billows have no withdrawing or turning back upon themselves. Thus, all Buddhas have appeared in the world for the sake of the Reason for the One Great Matter for which we train. Straightway, They help sentient beings open up spiritually and see the way to go, that they may awaken and know Buddha.

Also, They have a wondrous method which does not entangle or distress or foster defiling passions: it is called ‘pure meditation’. It is, of course, the samadhi which all Buddhas employ, to their delight. It is also called ‘the samadhi that is the lord of samadhis’. If even for a little while you reside contented within this samadhi, then straightway you will open your spiritual eye and clarify what your mind really is. Know well that this is indeed the right gate to Buddhahood. If you are desirous of clarifying what your mind really is, let go of all your deluded, discriminatory knowledge and explanations. Put aside the teachings of the world and the Teachings of the Buddha. Cut yourself free from all false and deluding opinions and sentiments. When you manifest the true Nature of the One Reality, the clouds of doubt and delusion that have accumulated will disperse, and the Moon of your Original Nature will once again shine clear and bright. The Buddha said, “Should you, upon hearing the Dharma, ponder on Its meaning, you are still as one outside the gate. To come back straightway to pure meditation is to calmly sit within the house.” How true this is! And just as with that ‘hearing and pondering’, likewise all your opinions are still not yet put to rest. Your mind is still hindered by attachments. Thus, you are as one sitting outside the gate. Just do pure meditation, and all will relax and come to rest. There is no place where you will not penetrate. Therefore, you will resemble one who returns home and sits in peace.

Now then, the defiling passions from the five skandhas all arise out of ignorance. ‘Ignorance’ is ‘not seeing the True Self clearly’; ‘pure meditation’ is ‘seeing the True Self clearly’. Even though you rid yourself of the five hindrances—namely, desire, anger, drowsiness, excitability, and doubt—you still have not rid yourself of ignorance. That was not the case with the Buddhas and Ancestors. If you wish to rid yourself of ignorance, then pure meditation and practice of the Way, together, will form the key. Someone of old said, “If you are exerting yourself unnecessarily, live quietly. If you live quietly, wisdom will manifest. If wisdom manifests, Truth will be seen.” If you wish to bring a disordered mind to an end, you must put thoughts of what is good or bad to rest and abandon all worldly pursuits and obstacles. Let your mind have no judgmental thoughts and fancies; let your body have no ‘business to attend to’. This is a primary point to heed, for, when you have brought the causes of your delusory thoughts to an end, the misleading mind will follow suit and become extinguished. When the misleading mind is extinguished, the Immutable

Body will manifest, and you will understand and forever know. This is not a teaching of nihilistic annihilation nor is it a teaching of a perpetual personality ever on the move.

The active pursuit of arts and crafts, medicine, and fortune-telling should all be left far behind. How much more so, singing and dancing, as well as seeking friendships, arguing, playing pranks, or engaging in debates and discussions. Keep your distance from chasing after things because of their reputation or appearance, seeking to profit from them! Although poetic eulogies and lyrics of various kinds are, by nature, the karmic effects of a pure attitude of mind, nevertheless, do not dote on reciting them. Lay aside brush and ink for composing literary works, and do not use them for such purposes. Such abstention will serve as a fine model for one who would tread the Path; it is what is adequate for a harmonious mind.

Do not be attached to the wearing of fine garments or of soiled or ragged clothing. Fine garments give birth to covetousness and encourage a fear of thieves and robbers; thus they are impediments for the follower of the Way. To refuse to accept them—whether offered with an ulterior motive or, openly, as alms—is a praiseworthy act traceable to ancient times. Even if you had them to begin with, do not worry about them; should some thief steal them, do not chase after them or begrudge their loss. Wash and patch your soiled or old robes, removing any dirt and grime. Make them clean and fit for wearing; otherwise, your body will be exposed to the cold or become ill from not removing the dirt and grime. These are also conditions that obstruct your pursuit of the Way.

Do not neglect taking care of your body's life. Lacking sufficient clothing, food, or sleep is referred to as the three insufficiencies, for each is a cause of regressions and lapses. Also, do not eat any sentient being nor any stale or spoiled food, for they are not pure. Such things will upset the stomach and make the body and the mind fevered and pained, so that, when sitting in meditation, you will feel ill and anxious. Likewise, do not be addicted to fine and fancy foods. When you have not rid yourself of thoughts of greed, it is never enough for the body and mind simply to be free from illness and anxiety. Food is taken simply to support one's vital energy, so do not lust after flavors. Since, in some cases, eating a hearty meal and then sitting can cause illness, you ought not to sit immediately after a large or a small meal. After a little time has passed, you will again be fit for sitting. Monks, without fail, should restrain themselves as to the amount of food eaten. 'To restrain intake' implies 'in relation to your particular body'. Within three parts, eat two parts and leave one. This principle can always find exception for medical reasons, such as the taking of sesame, potatoes, and so forth, as remedies for colds, for such practices are an essential technique in regulating the body.

When sitting in meditation, do not lean up against fences, walls, partitions, meditation chairs, screens, barriers, and the like. Also, do not sit for meditation in a spot where there is a strong wind or climb atop a stupa and meditate there, for these are all causes of illness.

When sitting in meditation, the body sometimes feels as though it were boiling hot or freezing cold, sometimes as though stagnant or like a whirlpool, sometimes strong or weak, sometimes heavy or light, sometimes as though being forced to stay awake: all are disharmonies of the breathing which you should certainly bring into regulation. To regulate the breathing, open the mouth wide for a short while. If your inhalations are long, let them be long; if short, let them be short. Slowly, slowly, regulate them, doing it ever so gradually. When you feel the opportune moment has come, gently adjust the breathing to normal, finally letting the breath pass through the nose, and then continue on in that way.

Sometimes, whilst sitting, your mind may feel as though it were sinking down or floating up. Sometimes it may seem foggy or uncommonly keen. Sometimes it may see through the wall to outside the room or see into your body. Sometimes it may see the Buddha in person or some Bodhisattva.* Sometimes it may bring up ‘sage opinions’ or ‘penetrating insights’ into the meaning of Scriptures and Commentaries. Experiencing various wondrous happenings such as these, along with their extraordinary characteristics, are, through and through, illnesses from a disharmony of thoughts and breathing. Should such an illness occur, focus your mind on your crossed legs as you sit. Should your mind feel dull and depressed, focus the mind on the space between your eyebrows. Should your mind run riot, focus your mind down the ridge of your nose onto the tanden. (The tanden is located an inch and a half below the navel.) Normally, when sitting, you should quietly focus your mind on the palm of your left hand. Then, should you sit for a long time, even though you do not force your mind to be focused, the mind will not of itself wander off. Furthermore, even though such things as the ancient writings are the instructions of bright minds within our Tradition, you ought not look at them, read them, or listen to them in too great a measure, since, in excess, this causes the mind to become scattered and disorderly.

In general, to exhaust and overwork body or mind causes illness. Do not by any means do sitting meditation during fires, floods, windstorms, or robberies, nor at the beach, in wineshops or brothels, in the houses of widows, or in the presence of female entertainers. Also, you should not take up residence in the houses of the ruler of the nation, his ministers, or other influential people, nor in the dwelling places of those who greatly crave fame or indulge in frivolous discussions and arguments.

Although participating in massive Buddhist Services and working on huge construction projects are, by and large, fine activities, they are impracticable for those devoted to seated meditation. Also, do not foster a passion for voicing the Dharma or for teaching others how to turn their hearts around, for those who are attached to these things are subject to scattered minds and disordered thoughts. Do not encourage a delight in being in crowds or long to seek for disciples. Do not become involved with too many activities or too many studies.

By no means sit in meditation in extreme brightness or dark, in extreme cold or heat, or the like, to say nothing of the places frequented by entertainers or gamblers. Within a monastery, at the home of good friends, deep in some forest or glen can serve you for this. By blue waters, in green hills are places to stroll quietly; near valleys, under trees are places for clearing the mind. Beholding impermanence, do not ignore it, for this encourages the mind to search the Way.

Your meditation cushion should be thick enough so that you are comfortable and at ease when sitting. Your meditation and ceremonial halls should be clean and neat—always make offerings of incense and flowers. Accordingly, the good deities that protect the Dharma, as well as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, will respond by guarding and watching over you. If you enshrine the image of a Buddha, Bodhisattva, or Arahant, Mara’s wicked minions with all their deluding charms and entanglements will be unable to depend on your support.

Constantly dwelling within great benevolence and compassion, transfer the immeasurable spiritual merits of your seated meditation to all sentient beings. Do not give rise to arrogance, conceit, or pride in your knowledge of the Dharma, for such attitudes lie outside the Way and are the methods of ordinary, everyday, people. Mindfully resolve to rid yourself of defiling passions; vow to personally confirm Buddhahood.

Just sit, without ‘doing’ anything: this is the essential technique for practicing pure meditation. Customarily, you should rinse your eyes and wash your feet before sitting. Make your body and mind quiet, and be well-regulated in your deportment at all times. You must discard worldly feelings and not cling to emotional attachments to the Way. Although you should not be stingy with the Dharma, even so, do not give voice to It if you are not asked, keeping to the ‘triple request’.* Follow the Four Noble Truths. Ten times having the urge to speak, let nine go past: let the moss grow around your mouth. Be like a fan in midwinter, or be like a wind chime hanging in space, which does not query which way the wind blows. Such are weathervanes for one who would tread the Way. It is enough to have the Dharma, you need not crave for anyone; it is enough to have the Way, you need not add self-praise: this is a primary point to heed.

Pure meditation does not concern itself with teachings, practices, or realization and it encompasses the virtues of all three. ‘Realization’ depends on the tenet of ‘waiting for enlightenment’, which is not the attitude of mind in pure meditation. ‘Practice’ depends on ‘sincere application and genuine effort’, which is not the attitude of mind in pure meditation. ‘Teachings’ depend on ‘cutting off evil and doing good’, which is not the attitude of mind in pure meditation. Even though teaching is done with regard to pure meditation, it is not customary teaching; it is called ‘the way of direct pointing to Buddha Nature and single Transmission from mind to mind’, in which the Master gives his whole being to voicing the Truth; his words, from the first, do not have chapter and verse.* It is the place where notions and ideas have come to an end, and the limits of reasoning are surpassed—one word encompasses the universe, even without the slightest shred of praise. This is surely the true and proper teaching of the Buddhas and Ancestors!

On the one hand, a Master may speak of practice, but it is a natural, spontaneous practice free from defiling passions. It is called ‘having nothing that the body needs to do; having nothing the mouth needs to chant, even to itself; having nothing that the mind needs to seek after’: the six sense faculties are naturally immaculate, all without stain or flaw. This is not the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths which Shravakas hold to, nor is it the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination which the Pratyekabuddhas speak of, nor is it the six paramitas and the ten thousand good deeds of the Bodhisattvas: none of these acts is ‘the seeing of the Eternal before one’s very eyes’, which is therefore called ‘being a Buddha’. Just reside at ease in the samadhi which the Buddhas themselves accepted and used. Joyfully and unhindered, perform the four actions of a Bodhisattva which ease the way to Buddhahood,* for these are surely the profound and wondrous deeds of Buddhas and Ancestors!

On the other hand, a Master may speak of personal confirmation, yet there is no confirming and there is confirmation. This is the samadhi that is lord of samadhis, the samadhi that manifests the wisdom of the Unborn, the samadhi that manifests all wisdom, the samadhi that manifests the wisdom of one’s Original Nature: it is the Bright Gate which the Tathagata’s Wisdom opens out; it is That which flows from ‘the Gate that leads to the Teaching on the great deeds that ease the way to Buddhahood’. It surpasses any social rules of ‘being worldly’ or ‘being saintly’; It lays bare the emotional thinking behind ‘delusion versus enlightenment’. How could this not be confirmation of Supreme Enlightenment?

Also, pure meditation does not stand against the Precepts, mindfulness, or wise discernment. Rather it combines with these three aspects of spiritual training. ‘Precepts’ are the resisting of what is wrong and the ceasing from what is evil. When seated in pure meditation, we observe that

there is no duality whatsoever; we cast aside the multitude of things and bring all conditions to rest. Neither the Teachings of the Buddhas nor the teachings of the world dominate us; emotional attachments to the Way and worldly feelings are both left behind. There is no ‘right and wrong’, no ‘good and evil’, for what is there to resist or cease from? This is what the Precepts that go beyond mental characterization are.*

‘Mindfulness’ is the observing that there is nothing that is in excess. When seated in pure meditation, we let go of ‘body and mind’, abandon ‘delusion and enlightenment’. We are unchanging, immovable, unwillful, impervious. We are like a simpleton or a legless man. We are like a mountain or an ocean: no trace of ‘movement versus stillness’ has yet arisen. When mindful, there is no fixed state of things. Because there is no fixed state of things, we call this Supreme Mindfulness.

‘Wise discernment’ is being selective within enlightened awareness. When seated in pure meditation, what is intellectually known spontaneously vanishes and self-consciousness is discarded. Your whole being’s Eye of Wise Discernment possesses no ‘specialized insight’: It clearly sees Buddha Nature and is, from the first, not deluded. Whilst sitting, you cut off the roots of thought, and this is wise discernment without any outer signs of wise discernment. Because it has no signs of wise discernment, it is called Supreme Discerning Wisdom.

The instructional Gates of the Buddhas—what They gave voice to in Their lifetime—contain nothing that is not within the Precepts, mindfulness, and wise discernment. Pure meditation has no Precepts that are not kept to, no mindfulness that is not put into practice, no wise discernment that does not know things through and through. ‘Overcoming demons’, ‘realizing Buddhahood’, ‘turning the Wheel’, ‘nirvana’: all depend on the strength of your pure meditation. The wondrous uses of your spiritual powers, your emitting light when voicing the Dharma, are all there when you are truly sitting in pure meditation. Moreover, participating in a spiritual examination is also a form of sitting in pure meditation.

When you wish to do seated meditation, first of all, seek a good, quiet place. See that your cushion is thickly padded. Do not let mist, smoke, or fog enter. Do not let rain and dew intrude upon you. Protect and take care of the ground where you put your knees. Keep your sitting place neat and clean. Although in ancient times some sat on a diamond throne, there are traces of their sitting atop boulders. Also, at no time should you fail to have some carpeting spread out beneath your meditation mat. Your sitting place must not be bright during the day or pitch dark at night. It should be warm in winter and cool in summer.*

This is the technique for meditating: Let go of, and abandon, awareness of thoughts; put to rest looking at mental fancies and images. Do not devise some notion of what ‘realizing Buddhahood’ is. Do not let ‘right and wrong’ control you. Act as if you were saving your head which was ablaze! The Tathagata’s sitting erect, Bodhidharma’s facing the wall at Shorin Monastery as he attended only to his meditation: both had no ‘other thing’ to them. Sekiso imitated a withered tree; Taihaku censured the practice of falling asleep whilst sitting. Do not get involved with the burning of incense, the making of bows, the reciting of the Buddha’s name, the undergoing of some penitential ritual, the reading of Scriptures, the holding on to a daily work schedule: just sitting, without ‘doing’ anything, is what you should aim at above all.

As a general practice, when doing seated meditation, you should put on your kesa. (Remove it in the dark before dawn and at dusk, as you come out of the meditation state.) Do not omit this. Whilst on your mat (which, when folded over is one foot two inches wide, when rolled up is three

feet six inches in circumference), do not always sustain the cross-legged, 'lotus' sitting position; range from a half-lotus position to, later, sitting with your feet under your spine. This is the method of sitting of the Buddhas and Ancestors: sometimes to do full lotus, sometimes half-lotus.

As for the full lotus method, first put your right foot on top of your left thigh. Then, put your left foot atop your right thigh, and loosely arrange your robes. (Gird your under-robe with a cord.) You should make everything well-regulated. Next, rest your right hand atop your left foot, and your left hand atop your right hand. With the thumbs of both hands touching, bring your hands near your body, the touching thumbs opposite the navel. Your body is held straight as you sit upright, not tilting to left or right, not leaning forwards or backwards. Your ears need to be symmetrically aligned with your shoulders, your nose with your navel. Your tongue rests against the roof of the mouth. Breathe through your nose. Your lips and teeth are together. Your eyes should be kept open, but neither fully open nor almost shut. Balance your body in this way, breathe out sharply, then breathe easily. This is what is called 'opening the mouth and expelling the breath once or twice'. Next, you should settle down in your sitting place by swaying your body seven or eight times in ever smaller movements, then steadily sitting erect. Take care in this not to think of any particular thing. How does one take care of this? By not trying to 'take care' of anything. This is the essential method of doing seated meditation: straightway, you should break free of any defiling passions and personally realize enlightenment.

When you wish to arise from meditation, first, place your hands respectfully on your knees and sway your body seven or eight times in ever larger movements. Open your mouth and exhale. Flatten out your hands and place them on the ground. Gently rise from your sitting place; slowly and with dignity begin to walk, moving at a normal pace.

Whilst sitting, if you begin to fall asleep, you should always sway your body or open your eyes wide. Also, focus your mind on the space between your eyebrows. If you are still not fully awake, use your hands to wipe your eyes or rub your body. If you are still not fully awake, rise from your sitting place and walk about calmly, making sure to do it at a normal pace. When you have taken about a hundred paces,

you will most likely have come out of your sleepiness. The method for walking calmly is to regularly take one breath for each half step. Although you are walking, do it as though you were not walking: be calm and tranquil, and do not thrash your body about. If after walking in this way you are still not fully awake, either rinse your eyes and douse your head with cold water or recite, say, the "Introduction to the Bodhisattva Precepts".* Apply these various skillful means so that you do not let yourself fall off into sleep. You should observe that the matter of birth and death is a great one, and that impermanence is swift indeed. What do you do about drowsiness when your Eye that seeks the Way is not yet bright? If periods of drowsiness persist, you should make a vow, saying, "Because my karmic habits are already heavy, I am now shrouded in sleep. When will I awaken from my dark and confused wandering in the mind? I pray that the Buddhas and Ancestors will confer their great compassion on me and remove my dark and heavy suffering."

If there are times when your thoughts go off in all directions or are agitated, focus your mind down the ridge of your nose to your tanden and count your cycle of inhalations. If your thoughts are still not at rest, you should call to mind some short koan which your Master has given you to guide you, such as, 'What is It that comes like this?', 'A dog's not having Buddha Nature', 'Ummon's Mount Sumeru', 'Joshu's oak tree', for instance: 'bland talk' is what meets the need.*

If your thoughts are still not at rest, do your meditation period by focusing on the great matter where your breathing comes to an end and your eyes close forever. Or, focus on the ‘not-yet-born state’ before a single thought has arisen. Then, when you are doing your daily activities, you will suddenly give rise to the two types of ‘emptiness’—that of there being no personal self and of there being no permanent self in phenomena—and your scattered thoughts will, without fail, lose their force.

After you have given rise to mindfulness, without a thought or care, you will manifest a dignified appearance. Then, what is right before your eyes will be your koan. You and it will not be ‘two things going around each other’; you will realize that that which your training confirms has come to full fruition. At that moment, what the koan is is ‘right before your eyes’. ‘What happens when signs of existence are not yet to be seen’, the conditions and causes which surround the eon of annihilation, and the importance of the wondrous spiritual deeds of the Buddhas and Ancestors are all just this One Matter for which we train. Straightway you should go take a day away from your normal schedule. Go rest. Go cool down. Let ‘one thought is equivalent to ten thousand years’ pass. Let ‘being cold ashes’ or ‘being a dead tree’ pass. Let ‘being an incense burner in an old shrine’ pass. Let ‘the single white thread’ pass. Wholeheartedly do I pray for this; with all my heart do I so pray.