

## Comparison between postures of meditation Theravada Buddhism and Taoism

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The primary goal of this research is to examine the similarities and differences between Taoist and Theravada Buddhist approaches to sitting and walking meditation in light of their potential applications in treating mental and physical illness in modern society.

**Method:** The primary methodological strategy used to examine the central argument of this study is historiography. This study's content analysis relies heavily on primary sources like archival materials and documents and a wide range of scholarly arguments.

**Findings:** People's physical and mental well-being have been shown to improve through both sitting and working meditation, even in today's stressful, competitive, complicated, and market-oriented society. A recent explosion in popularity shows that the highest-ranking professionals and wealthiest people are practising sitting and working meditation to improve their health and productivity. It's not just a fad sweeping the nation; it's a worldwide phenomenon. People in countries that don't practise Buddhism or Taoism, like those in Europe, have been innovating by meditating for the same benefits.

**Implications/Novel Contribution:** The increasing prevalence of non-epidemic diseases as a result of mental stress highlights the relevance of this study in several ways for the modern world. Both of these seated meditation positions have been shown to have beneficial effects on stress and physical health. In addition, this leads to the simplification of all manner of mundane, real-world tasks. The results of this study can be used by academics who plan to focus their careers on studying meditation and postures.

*Keywords:* Sitting Meditation, Working Meditation, Physical well-being, Physiological Well-Being, Taoism, Buddhism

**Received:** 21 August 2018 / **Accepted:** 11 September 2018 / **Published:** 8 October 2018

### INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

Sri Lankans have strong ties to Theravada Buddhism, the country's predominant religion. Theravada Buddhism has profoundly impacted many facets of society, including economics, politics, and even the selection and removal of monarchs, as evidenced by historical documents. As a result, it is not only the bedrock of Sri Lankan human civilization but also an integral part of the country's cultural identity.

Taoism is also the major religion in China, which was originated about 2000 years back. Taoist teachings cover a wide range of areas in peoples' lives similar to Buddhism. China without Taoism can be interpreted as a tree, which is devoid of roots. Taoism is greatly involved in expanding the knowledge at individual and national levels in China. Among the teachings of Taoism the idea of symbiosis is an interesting phenomenon to society.

There are many books written about these two religions which has a significant value in physical and psychological aspects, by several national and international writers. The researches and books written regarding the meditation practiced in these religions which bring about positive results in psychological as well as physical well being are very much of importance (Angriani, Ariffin, & Rahmawati, 2017; Cuyugan et al., 2017; Mongia, 2016; Nuchso, Tuntivivat, & Klayklung, 2016; Shaw, 2006). Most of these researches discuss each meditation separately in various aspects. But so far there had been no comparative studies done regarding the meditations of Taoism and Theravada Buddhism. Thus my research became slight difficult during the literature survey and I have proceeded with my research after careful analysis on the literature written about each religion separately.

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## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in my research was to make use of primary and secondary sources and to conduct discussions with scholars of Sri Lanka and China that are well versed in this subject. Another research methodology employed by myself here was to get a large number of facts revealed by conducting a discussion with a Buddhist monk in meditation center Sri Lanka.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A fact that becomes evident when meditation techniques of Buddhism and Tao religion are studied is the existence of similarities and differences between them. One of the meditation positions in Buddhism is the seated position (Shaw, 2006). In this position one sits on the floor and then bends the right leg and keeps it on the bent left leg. This while keeping the straight body one keeps the right palm in the left palm and continues meditating with the eyes half closed. This is also known as the seated posture method. The following diagram clarifies this.



Figure 1. Seated posture method

This is indicated as the easiest and most common position among the Buddhist meditation techniques Buddha hood was achieved by the Bosath in this position. Lord Buddha as well as his followers are mostly shown in this meditative position. This method is also known as being in a Samadhi.

There is also a method of meditation carried out in this manner in the Tao religion. the mediators cross their legs to create a base for sitting on the floor. The basic sitting postures described in (Taoism are Crossed legs , Half Lotus and Full Lotus postures)<sup>1 2 3</sup>. The sitting on the wall to make base should be done crossing their legs One of these postures. He who follow that are able to place the hands overlap inference of the dantien or on the knee palm. Haven energy is received by this. The entire physical body is bathed by soles and fall lotus with together. Universal Chi is yang in nature will ascend towards to the 1st crossed legs; legs are simply crossed in front of the body and hid under the thigh. It is the easiest one most appropriate to beginner. Three half lotus; one cross top other and place one on opposite thigh. There would be very flexible legs and ankles. This is difficult more than crossed one. If it so provides stronger base. The upward facing foot can be used as channel down energy.

Full Lotus; Same to half lotus but not crossed legs and foot on opposite thigh. Feet should turn to sky. The feet should close to body as the flexibility. This is the most difficult one. The Solid base is provided. This has provided

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<sup>1</sup>Crossed legs: simply cross the legs in front of the body. Both feet are hid under the thigh. It is easier, and is recommended for beginner

<sup>2</sup>Half Lotus: cross one leg on top of the other. Place one foot on top of the opposite thigh. The sole of the foot is to face upward. This posture requires greater flexibility of the leg, and the ankle. It is more difficult than the crossed leg, but it provides a stronger base. The foot that is facing upward can be used to channel down energy

<sup>3</sup>Full Lotus: same as the Half Lotus except that both legs are cross, and both feet are on the opposite thigh. Both feet should face the sky. As your flexibility increases, the feet should come closer to the body. This posture is the most difficult, but it gives the meditator a solid base. The Full Lotus also provides the body with extra blood supply from the legs, as the legs were crossed. This enables more energy to travel upward to the higher centers

extra blood supplier to body from legs. These facts are more energy to upwards. The general Rule of this sitting posture is to be comfortable which ever done.

Analyzing the above facts the sitting postures of both meditation techniques it becomes evident that postures described in both religions are the same. Both Theravada Buddhists and Taoist teachings suggest that the best sitting posture is the full Lotus posture. However, for beginners both religions approve the half lotus position and crossed leg position.

The position of hands in Theravada meditation is always on the lap with hands overlapping each other (usually right palm over the left palm) and in contrast in Taoist sitting posture the hand could be kept either overlapped in front of the dantien( Lap) or on the knee palms up.

Two postures are more basic for meditation in the Taoist meditation. They have seated posture and standing postures. In Theravada there are no such postures described by Lord Buddha as postures of meditation.

In seated posture, the mediator sits on a chair with a flat sitting area. It should have the same height as the mediator's knees (B. Frantzis, 2009). He must sit with feet flat on the floor. These feet should.

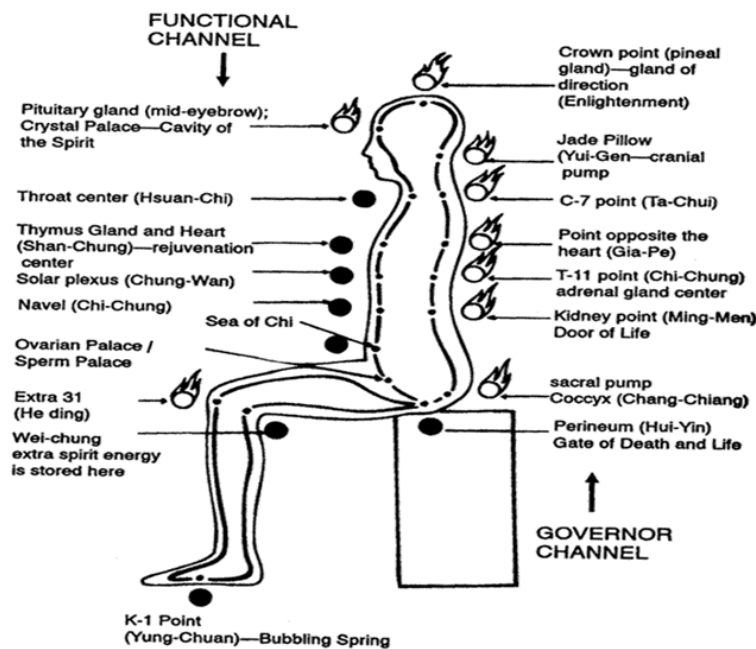


Figure 2. Posture

Be kept apart as the shoulders. According to standing posture, the practitioner should stand since about one. However it might seem like person are not doing anything. But workloads are equal physically and mentally. Taoist called to this "Seeking motion within stillness" The Practitioners are doing energetic patterns in inner and outer.

Naturally, Legs strength and Standing opens the hands and feet. It can also teach that energy is ground to the earth. Standing posture comes from the crown of the head. And earth chi come from the sole of the feet. As a result of that standing has used to cultivate the chi.

In Buddhism there is another posture identified for meditation. That is waking (Hanh & Anh-Huong, 2006). Lord Buddha introduced this to the world during the periods of first seven weeks after gaining Buddha hood (Gethin et al., 1998). This meditation is conducted in the following manner.

Walking meditation is a method of keeping the mind on a common focus. It can be practiced anywhere, anytime, for the rest of our life. It can also produce very deep concentration and clear insights into the mind/body processes, as in sitting meditation. Therefore, every sitting meditation should be preceded by walking, of at least ten minutes, because walking centers the mind and provides the necessary preparation for a mindful sitting. The walking path should be between three to ten meters in length, ideally about six meters. Walk with eyes cast down about two meters ahead of your steps. Hold your hands in front or behind. Before changing posture from sitting to walking, practitioners should make a note in the intending mind as intending. When the practitioners reach the other end of

the walking path, they stop, stand and turn while closing their eyes. Sometimes sensations may interrupt during walking meditation such as a headache or a dizzy spell etc. Then practitioners should stop and note 'dizziness', or 'headache'. The practitioners react to them as earlier mentioned in sitting meditation. Remember, whatever sensations occur in the body, the mind (knowing) and actions must come together on every occasion. The action "standing" should be carried out slowly. Physical movement of the foot in walking meditation has six parts (Hanh & Anh-Huong, 2006).

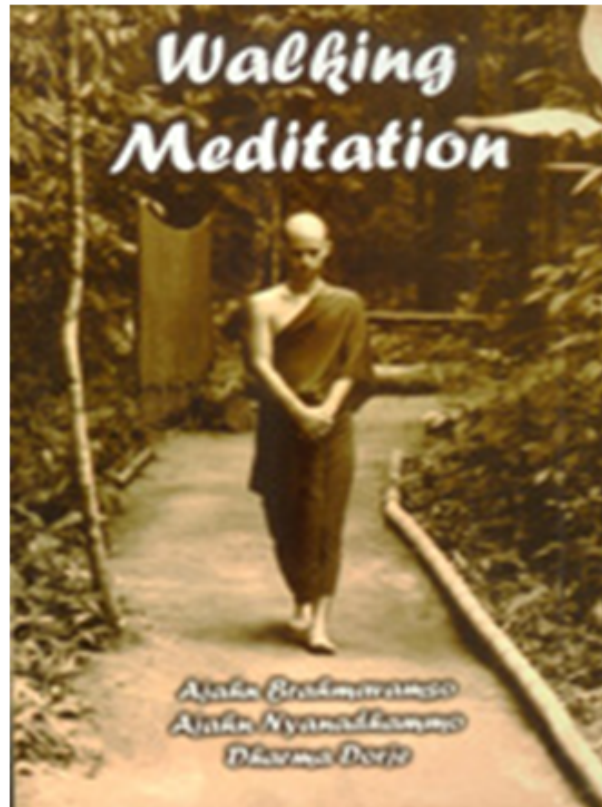


Figure 3. Walking meditation



Figure 4. Positions

The practitioners must follow the whole process of the movements of the feet very attentively, closely and slowly. They can see the walking process of six parts when the mind is subtle with its skills of attention. Beginners should spend time noting Part 1 for two or three days. After that they can go straight to the noting of the next parts. For experienced practitioners, they should spend about five minutes noting Part 1 first and then go to the next steps.

A reason for noting 'attention', or 'wishing', or 'wanting' before changing postures is because every action is the work of bodily and mental processes. The aim of awareness is to realize them in their true nature. Therefore, this meditation is not just for concentration but for realization of mental physical processes too. This realization is called 'Vipassana Nana', insight knowledge that leads to enlightenment (Gyatso, 2008).

The following description about the walking meditation in Tao religion shows that it bears a similarity to this. For meditative walking, it is good to walk in gardens. A quiet environment is the pre-condition. The air is cleaner than on the street and the surrounding plants increase the supply of oxygen. Concentrate the mind without tension. Cast the eyes forward and place the tongue against the palate then walk with the body erect.

Relax the shoulders and loosen the elbows and knee joints. The arms hang naturally; at the sides' swinging neither too high nor too low in coordination with the steps. As in Tai chi chuan the fingers should not be separate but should be together and curve naturally. Direct the bulk of your weight to below the navel the foot touching the ground will bear the brunt of your weight while the other foot remains light and weightless. Wear shoes that are roomy enough to let the toes and feet move comfortably. Thus when you place the whole bottom of the foot on the ground while walking the pressure of the step stimulates the veins, arteries, nerve lines and glands contained there. Meditative walking is auxiliary to sitting meditation (B. K. Frantzis, 2001).



Figure 5. Taoist walking meditation

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

According to the above analysis, there are close similarities in the ways how the body is positioned in this posture. Similarities are seen in the manner the hands are kept, the activity of eyes, selection of a suitable environment and the way of walking. But differences are seen among the objectives of meditation. While the Theravada Buddhism keeps one of the 41, kammattana (objects of meditation) as the objective, the Tao religion does not speak about any such objective. Therefore, this could be introduced as a posture of meditation taught based on worldly objectives.

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