



## **Meditation**

Meditation is called Sun in Korea, Zen in Japan and Cha'n in China. Regardless of what it is called, it has the same basic purpose in each culture. As a result of thousands of years of cultural influences, however sometimes the approach, methods and goals are quite different.

It is generally agreed that meditation was born in India and, reached full maturity in China. The legendary monk, Bodhidharma (480-528 AD), was the well known founder of a new Buddhist system called Cha'n. According to legend, he arrived at the Shaolin Temple and meditated in front of the wall for nine years. The temple even today preserves the wall, which allegedly still shows his projected figure from his prolonged presence. In this meditation, it is said, Bodhidharma was so in tune with the laws of nature that he could hear the conversation of ants.

Students should have an understanding of the principles and basic methods of meditation. If anyone wishes to truly master the art of Tang Soo Do, they must transcend mere physical techniques so that their practice may become an "artless art" which springs from the unconscious. Many students confuse ki kong (Nae Kong, or breathing exercises) with meditation, as it looks similar in methods and posture, but meditation is a totally different discipline.

Meditation deals with the mind, while ki kong develops energy through breathing exercises. Our traditional Muk Yum ritual at the start and end of class is meditation. Generally, meditation is a discipline which takes the student into relaxation by clearing the mind, developing Moo Shim (empty mind) and entering tranquility. Meditation relieves many burdens and distractions of daily life.

In the East, there is a wealth of knowledge available through thousands of years of experience that meditation contributes to healing illnesses such as insomnia, high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes. Meditation alone or used in conjunction with ki kong (dan jun breathing) can be very effective as a healing therapy for mind and body. In terms of meditation, an action is the result of moment of the mind (or emotion) and the body. If one halts the movement of the two elements, it will develop perfect tranquility. In this state, one can discover the true "self", develop a constructive reserve of force and experience enlightenment.

A human being exists in three levels of consciousness: the conscious mind, the unconscious, and the subconscious. These levels are strained or disturbed by the rigours of everyday life. Meditation detaches the conscious mind from these disturbances and allows it to enter the unconscious state. Our conscious mind alone is limited, and cannot handle the tremendous barrage of information with which it comes into contact with, therefore the information is channeled to the subconscious mind. The state of unconsciousness is realised only when one completely empties awareness of the conscious self in its entirety. Then the mind becomes calm and clear as still water. Progression to enlightenment occurs only when the student is able to let go of attachments to beliefs, perceptions, and activities.

In order to produce a state of Moo Shim, the meditator needs a peaceful and comfortable position and quiet surroundings. This is why serious meditators often choose mountains or other natural settings for their practice. Physical discomfort is also detrimental to beginning meditators, so a supportive atmosphere and position is helpful to develop relaxation and focus. Meditation starts when conscious concentration ends, and is pushed further into higher creativity by imagination (inner visualization), since passive Moo Shim is not sufficient for such states.

Without using imagination or visualization, many beginning meditators become frustrated and unsuccessful in their efforts at meditation. Creative visualization techniques can bring about the desired goal. By using a special sound, picturing the ideal self or technique, or utilizing similar methods, interactions may be set up which achieve the desired results. For example, if a student pictures themselves being successful at a specific goal, actual achievement will surely follow, because imagined and actual performance is one sequential whole. In modern psychology it is a well known tactic to use affirmative imagination as a method of preparing the mind for action. Using imagery in meditation will guide the body to make the correct muscular movements desired by the student. If Tang Soo Do students will vividly imagine themselves performing all correct techniques, they will find that their movements will improve tremendously.

Candlelight meditation is one of the popular ways to practice focus, to develop internal energy flow and to enhance awareness. To use this method, simply place a lighted candle 2-3 feet in front of you. Begin by focusing on the flame and begin to meditate, and then begin to use your visualization and imagery.

The benefits of meditation are many: a calmer personality, greater understanding and insight, spontaneity, physical well-being and more efficient, effective actions.