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# Visiting Teacher: Guo Gu

*The Editors*

4 minutes

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A Q&A with Guo Gu, founder of and teacher at the Tallahassee Chan Center and Sheng Yen Associate Professor of Chinese Buddhism at Florida State University

By [The Editors](#)

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Photo by Myosen Sprott

**Where did you grow up?** I was born in Taiwan and grew up in the New Jersey–New York area.

**When did you become a Buddhist and why?** In 1972, my whole family and I took refuge in the three jewels [the Buddha, his teachings, and the Buddhist community] with an ascetic monk in Taiwan named Master Guangqin (1892–1986). I had no idea what it [meant to be a Buddhist](#), but I was naturally drawn to seated meditation and Guangqin. He taught me how to sit in the full lotus posture and focus on my breath.

**Who became your teacher?** After coming to New York, I met [Master Sheng Yen](#) (1931–2009) when I was 11. I consider him my root teacher, my spiritual father. The three decades with him shaped [every aspect of my life](#).

**What's your favorite breakfast on retreat?** We were served only oatmeal and fruit, so that became my favorite!

**What's your daily practice?** Each day is a new beginning. This

moment is practice: grounding and offering. *Grounding* means relaxing into whatever situation I am in. *Offering* means responding to anyone or anything I encounter by not injecting my sense of self. This last part is the key—offering oneself by letting go of the self.

**What's the longest you've gone without meditating? How do you get back on track?** After so many decades of daily seated meditation practice, I never really stopped. But this is a limited way of understanding seated meditation. The position is not important; what is important is the attitude.

**What was your first job?** At a vegetable farm picking tomatoes and peppers. I was 13, and it was totally illegal. My older brother and his friends were all hired to work there, so I got hired. I have fond memories of tomato fights whenever the boss was not around.

**Most used emoji?** 🙏



This March, join Guo Gu for Tricycle Meditation Month and his Dharma Talks video series, “Silent Illumination,” at [tricycle.org/dharmataalks](https://tricycle.org/dharmataalks).



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