

## Hexagram 22 Simplicity



*Simplicity.*

*Spiritual influence nourishing all.*

*The unimportant.*

*Benefit from having and moving toward a worthy purpose.*

### Structure:

- Above mountain ☶. Below ☲ fire.
- Bright display under massive stillness.

**Ideogram:** cowry shells (money) and flowers, linking value with ornament.

**Image:** Fire breaks out from secret depths. The blazing fire illuminates and beautifies the mountain, but the light does not shine far.

We perceive Earth and living forms as the most beautiful. As creation fully reveals substance, any effort to add to how Earth and beings appear detracts from their beauty and substance.

Our experience of others has two aspects: form and substance. The sage values substance over form. However, we can only know about the substance of other beings from their behavior. Our actions reveal our being, not our appearance or possessions. To devote care to appearance for its own sake without considering how we contribute to the well-being of others leads to a shallow life.

Sages shape their behavior by knowing the Tao's laws and limits (☶) and the virtues (☲) of the spiritual path: love, wisdom, justice and limits and morals. They act to bring to life the loving ways of the spirit in ways that benefits all. Sages express their respect for the Earth and moral limits by persistently simplifying their lives to live within its limits and by living in harmony with other beings. Knowing the ways of the spirit informs them on how to live.

Sages act justly by reducing what harms life and the Earth and increasing what benefits all. Actions shape the world. What we do informs others of what we value. The wise contemplate the behavior of others to understand what they value. The wise align their lives with the balance and harmony of Earth Interbeing.

### Cultural forms

Cultural forms connect people to other levels of meaning. Rituals, celebrations, symbols, and images communicate common values. How others collectively perceive us informs them about our values.

The way we form ourselves into groups and community reflects the purpose of our group and community. When beings associate with one another, they do so through forms of conduct, ordered and organized by their species, place, and values. What people actually do as a group reveal their true substance, what they collectively consider most important.

Exceptional cultures glamorize consumerism. Yet the beauty of those fixated on their appearance and possessions does not approach simplicity. The most beautiful form reveals its substance. Within daily life, sages prefer simplicity and humility. They avoid going beyond meeting their basic needs as excessive consumption harms the Earth Interbeing. At first, we may struggle with renouncing materialism, yet sages transcend the privileged cultural forms of consumerism to live in ways that care for the Earth Interbeing. Sages model how to live in ways that benefit all.

The selfish do not value the self-discipline and virtues of the wise. Thus, the I Ching encourages withdrawal from contact with those who seek nothing but materialism. Yet within this retreat, the wise find others whom they can emulate and who support their path. Faithfulness to what benefits all creates a mutual attraction among those on the path of simplicity. Such spiritual friends may have even lived in ages past, but because of their sincerity to the good, accomplished sages transcend all limits of space-time.

Those who value plain simplicity do not lose the way. The wise adorn arising experience with love, calm, and gratitude, and devote themselves to the sacred within the moment by caring for all life and the Earth, the temple in which we live.

**Line 1:** This line represents the feet, the beginning of movement. The line does for itself what it has the capacity to do. Although it has means to have others do its work, the line chooses self-sufficiency and simplicity over luxury.

**Line 2:** It takes time for a living form to mature and fully reveal its substance. The wise focus on their inner being by cultivating a spiritual life and seeking the wisdom of others. Ultimately, the sage's form becomes transparent as it has come to live the ways of the spirit.

**Line 3:** Excessive concern about its form diminishes the line's clarity of wisdom and leads to its loss of the spiritual path. This warning applies to both ostentatious displays of wealth and to extreme asceticism. The wise know that any practice can turn into a rigid form that no longer connects them with the spirit. They know the importance of living a balanced and harmonious life.

**Line 4:** The form of old age may cause others to believe it reveals a wise person. Yet the actions of the even the aged reveal their substance. If they should behave in selfish and unjust ways, others should doubt their wisdom. The truly wise of any age never transgress Earth and moral limits.

**Line 5:** The line seeks wisdom and has withdrawn into the solitude of the heights, distancing itself from contact with others who seek luxury. Devotion to the spiritual path has greater value than material possessions. The line finds a spiritual friend in the top line, the one who foregoes all cultural forms to enjoy simplicity.

**Line 6:** The line represents a mountain's peak. Those at the highest stages of spiritual fulfillment discard all ornamentation. Their transparent form reveals their love for all and the ways of the spirit. The highest beauty consists in the simple fitness of the content's form.