

太  
極  
拳

# TAI CHI

DANCE OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

Ancient Secrets to Health Tao Meditation Relaxation



TAI CHI BALI  
MOUNTAIN RETREAT  
COURSE BOOK & DVD  
[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)

Written and Compiled by  
DAVE WEST

This book is created with love and distributed free.

It is meant to provide guidance and counsel for those who wish to practise.

# TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT



TAI CHI TIBETAN YOGA  
CHI KUNG SIVANANDA YOGA



## THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

- 3 Nights 4 Days Luxury Hotel
- 3 Mountain Treks to Lakes and Waterfalls
- Hot Springs Canoeing Kopi Luwak
- 10 Classes with Qualified Instructors
- Retreat Course Book and DVD
- Transport Service
- USD 495 per person USD 750 for couples

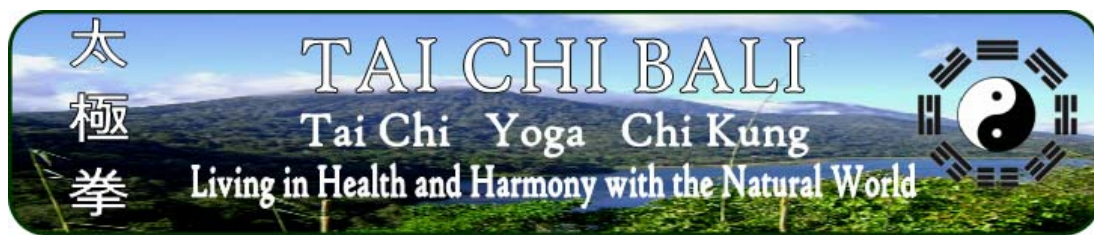


*TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT is hidden deep in the foothills of the volcanic forest, where the cool mountain air of North Bali is the perfect environment to relax and rejuvenate, deepen your TAI CHI, YOGA or CHI KUNG practice, and refresh yourself with natural healing energy. The aim of this retreat is to inspire you to develop a daily practice and holistic lifestyle that creates positive changes in all aspects of your life. During the retreat a natural force field develops within you that recharges your whole being with positive energy, vitality and inner peace. Experienced international instructors guide you through the course and mountain treks. Classes and retreats can be modified for all ages and levels.*

Special thanks and blessings to the people of B a l i

Tel: +62 8123 646 7324 Email: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com)

[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)



## WELCOME TO TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT

*Tai Chi Bali provides authentic wisdom and training from ancient China, India and Tibet, for living in health and harmony with the natural world. Opening the heart with meditation is the return to Truth and Love.*

**TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT** reconnects you with the Source; 'The Healing Power of Nature'. During the 3 nights and 4 days a natural force field is created around you that recharges your whole being with positive energy and vitality. Awakening your inner strength inspires you to develop a daily spiritual practice and holistic lifestyle that creates positive changes in all aspects of your life. The retreat centre is hidden deep in the foothills of the volcanic rainforest, where the cool mountain air of North Bali is the perfect environment to relax and rejuvenate, deepen your Tai Chi practice, explore the tropical countryside, and refresh yourself with natural healing energy. Qualified international instructors guide you through the course and mountain treks. Classes and retreats can be modified for all ages and levels. For more information please email our instructors directly: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com)

- **10 TAI CHI FOR HEALTH CLASSES, RETREAT COURSE BOOK and DVD** are included in the Retreat Price. Topics include Tao Philosophy and cosmology, Tai Chi for Health (non-combat), Chi Kung, Tao Nature Meditation.

- **3 MOUNTAIN TREKS** through tropical rainforests to rivers, lakes and waterfalls are included in the Retreat Price. These Mountain Treks vary from 1 to 3 hours walking along gentle ascents and descents (See Map: Trek 1, 2, 3)

- **CLIMATE AT THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT**

Temperature: 15-25°C    Rainfall: High    Humidity: High

- **TAI CHI BALI SURVIVAL KIT** A selection of practical items and trekking comforts to enhance your Mountain Retreat experience are included in the Retreat Price, including: Light Raincoat – Healthy Snacks – Herbal Teas – Electrolytes – Map – Schedule - and may vary subject to availability.

- **THE HOTEL** is located 2 hours north of Ngurah Rai International Airport. You will be staying at an altitude of 1300 metres near Bedugul, North Bali. The Hotel offers a combination of modern comforts, friendly professional service, and private lumbung rooms surrounded by natural gardens and scenic mountain views. Several paths lead through the rainforest to waterfalls, coffee, clove and cocoa plantations. 3 nights accommodation are included in the Retreat Price.

- **THE RESTAURANT** offers a choice of European, Indonesian, Balinese and Chinese cuisine at reasonable prices. Upon arrival special meal requests (vegetarian) may be given to the Hotel Manager and are subject to availability. Several other inexpensive restaurants are located nearby in the village 20 minutes walk. 3 Hotel Breakfasts are included in the Retreat Price. Also included is a Certificate and Closing Lunch at a mountain view restaurant on the last day of the retreat.

- **LUNCH & DINNER** are not included in the Retreat Price and will be charged in addition at menu price. You will need to bring enough money for 5 meals. Hotel Restaurant prices are inexpensive and the food is delicious.

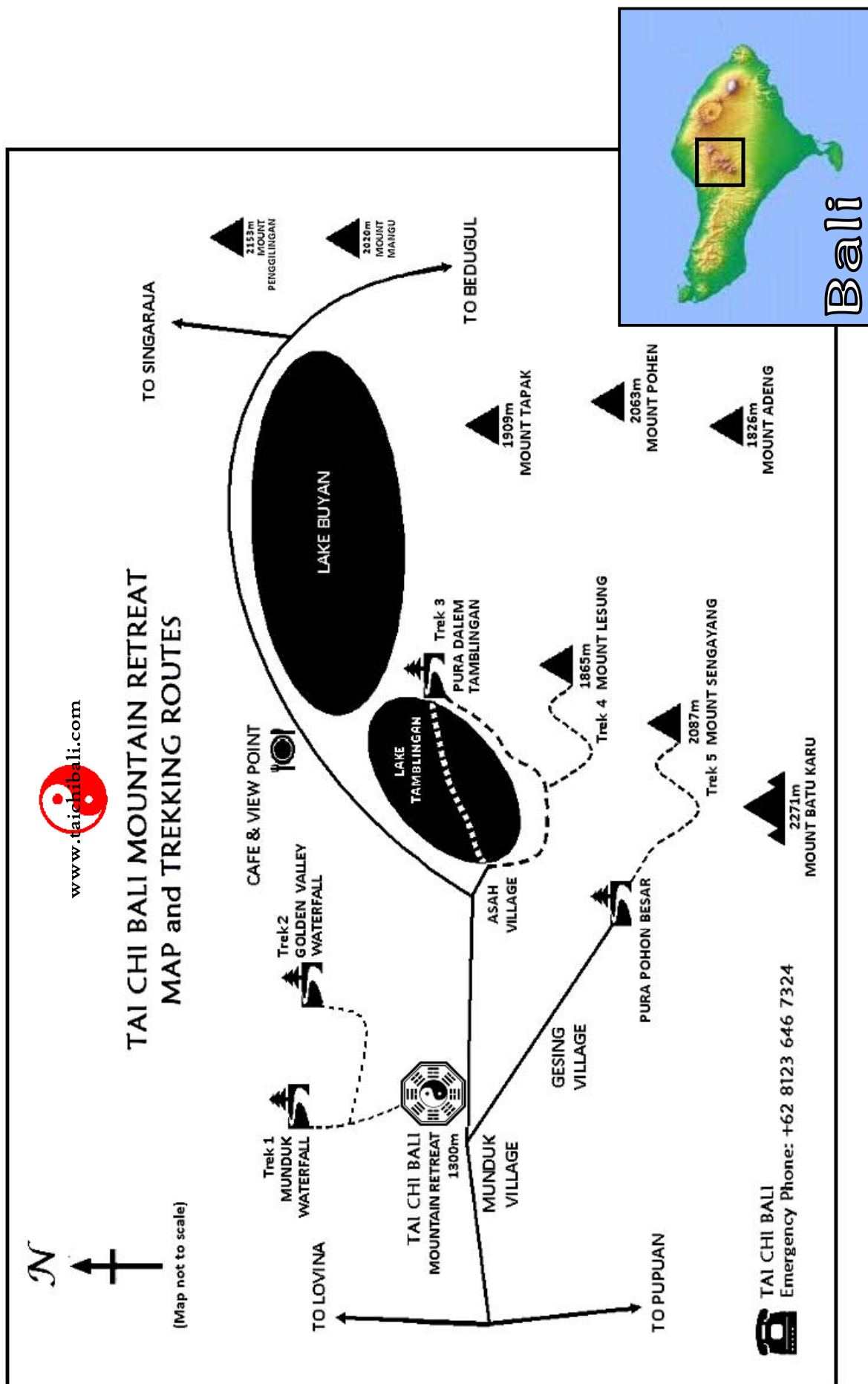
- **WHAT TO BRING** – Raincoat – Trekking Shoes – Comfortable Clothes – Notebook – Smiles

- **CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT** is awarded to those who participate in all classes and complete a written assignment of 30 questions.

- **ECO - MORALITY CONSERVATION AGREEMENT** The following agreement is a requirement for all guests, students and staff attending Tai Chi Bali classes and retreats:

- ❖ *To protect and preserve the natural world*
- ❖ *To promote life of all plants, trees, insects, birds, fish, animals and humans*
- ❖ *To take all your rubbish back to the hotel*
- ❖ *To cultivate moral character, civilization and manners*
- ❖ *To develop unity and modesty through correct guiding thoughts*
- ❖ *To work hard to develop one's skills*
- ❖ *To refrain from taking intoxicating substances*
- ❖ *To refrain from sexual misconduct*
- ❖ *To be truthful, friendly and opened hearted to all*

Please contact us for full details & dates of upcoming Retreats: Email: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com)



The Retreat Schedule may vary according to the capacity and limitations of the group, and is subject to change according to weather and trekking conditions



## TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT SCHEDULE

	Day 1 - THURSDAY	Day 2 - FRIDAY	Day 3 - SATURDAY	Day 4 - SUNDAY
7.00 – 8.00am		<p><u>CLASS 1 – TREK TO MUNDUK WATERFALL</u> Meet in the Hotel Lobby at 7.00am. GATHERING THE CHI EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION ONENESS WITH NATURE MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CLASS 5 – TREK TO MUNDUK WATERFALL</u> Meet in the Hotel lobby at 7.00am. GATHERING THE CHI EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION ONENESS WITH NATURE MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CLASS 9 – TREK TO MUNDUK WATERFALL</u> Meet in the Hotel Lobby at 7.00am. GATHERING THE CHI EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION ONENESS WITH NATURE MEDITATION</p>
8.00 – 9.00am		<p><u>BREAKFAST</u> <u>CLASS 2 – TREK TO LAKE TAMBUKAN</u> Meet in the Hotel Lobby at 9.00am. ENERGY CLEANSING WITH TREES GATHERING THE CHI TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION ONENESS WITH NATURE MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>BREAKFAST</u> <u>CLASS 6 – TREK TO GOLDEN VALLEY WATERFALL</u> Meet in the Hotel Lobby at 9.00am. ENERGY CLEANSING WITH TREES GATHERING THE CHI TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION ONENESS WITH NATURE MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>BREAKFAST</u> <u>CLASS 10 – 6<sup>TH</sup> &amp; 7<sup>TH</sup> PRINCIPLE OF TAI CHI</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 9.00am. OPENING THE GATES GATHERING THE CHI FROM TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION OPENING THE HEART MEDITATION Check-out and meet in the lobby at 12.30 pm</p>
9.00 – 12.00pm	<p>Meet at 1.00pm at the meeting point Bali Buddha, Kerobokan. Lunch and Depart</p>			
12.00 – 4.00pm	<p><u>LUNCH</u></p>	<p><u>LUNCH</u></p>	<p><u>LUNCH</u></p>	<p><u>LUNCH</u></p>
4.00 – 6.00pm	<p>Arrive at the Mountain Retreat at approx 4.30pm Check-in and Relax</p>	<p><u>CLASS 3 – 2<sup>ND</sup> PRINCIPLE OF TAI CHI</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 4.00pm. OPENING THE GATES GATHERING THE CHI FROM TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CLASS 7 – 4<sup>TH</sup> PRINCIPLE OF TAI CHI</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 4.00pm. OPENING THE GATES GATHERING THE CHI FROM TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CHECKOUT AND LUNCH</u> Meet in the Lobby at 12.30pm Take Transport to Alamkoe for Lunch. Certificates and Closing. At 2.00 pm take Transport to the meeting point at Bali Buddha, Kerobokan. Arrive approx 4.30pm.</p>
6.00 – 7.30pm	<p><u>DINNER</u></p>	<p><u>DINNER</u></p>	<p><u>DINNER</u></p>	
7.30 – 9.00pm	<p><u>INTRODUCTION – 1<sup>ST</sup> PRINCIPLE</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 7.30pm. GATHERING THE CHI EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION OPENING THE HEART MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CLASS 4 – 3<sup>RD</sup> PRINCIPLE OF TAI CHI</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 7.30pm. GATHERING THE CHI TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION SIX HEALING SOUNDS &amp; INNER SMILE OPENING THE HEART MEDITATION</p>	<p><u>CLASS 8 – 5<sup>TH</sup> PRINCIPLE OF TAI CHI</u> Meet in the Yoga Hall at 7.30pm. GATHERING THE CHI TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION MICROCOSMIC ORBIT MEDITATION OPENING THE HEART MEDITATION</p>	<p><i>* You may extend your stay subject to Hotel rates and availability, but must find your own transport for the return journey. Please ask at the Reception for more information. From all the instructors at Tai Chi Bali we thank you for attending our Mountain Retreat and wish you happiness and health.</i></p>

The Retreat Schedule may vary according to the capacity and limitations of the group, and is subject to change according to weather and trekking conditions

Over the course of 3 nights and 4 days you will be studying, practising and experiencing over 20 techniques from the art of Tai Chi for Health (non-combat), including Chi Kung and other Tao techniques listed below. Qualified international instructors will guide you through this peaceful retreat and along the mountain treks, and have studied Tai Chi for Health, Chi Kung and Yoga with masters from China, Thailand, India, USA, Canada and UK. This special Mountain Retreat Training Programme combines ancient and modern wisdom for your mental, physical and spiritual health.

## TAO PHILOSOPHY

### I CHING – PA KUA – TAO TE CHING

The teachings of these classic Chinese philosophies are based on a great underlying principle; the Tao, or "Way", which is the source of all being. Through the understanding of this principle, all the contradictions, divisions and distinctions of our existence are ultimately resolved. This principle can only be understood through intuitive transformation, the regular practice of Tai Chi Chuan, and incorporating Yin Yang and Chi theory into daily life. By removing the obstacles clouding our consciousness we once again connect to our original insight. This allows us to see clearly and understand the workings and wonders of the cosmos.

### SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF TAI CHI

Cultivating these seven principles guides the peaceful warrior to awakening the compassionate spirit inside. They are the keys to health, inner peace and happiness, and the essence of spiritual progress. This requires mental, physical and spiritual training and adjustment, through regular practise under the guidance of an experienced master.

## TAO NATURE MEDITATIONS

### CONTEMPLATING NATURE

Spend as much time as we can in nature, absorbing its powerful healing energy, and appreciating and contemplating the simplicity and beauty of the nature world.

### ONENESS WITH NATURE

Take a walk into Mother Nature, taking deep gentle breaths to absorb the natural healing energy. Meditate in a natural healing place that feels right to you, and simply let go.

### ENERGY CLEANSING WITH TREES

This is a great exercise for cleansing the energy of the body, and transforming negative emotions into positive energy, particularly if you are sick, depressed or recovering from illness.

## STANDING CHI KUNG

### OPENING THE GATES

Opening the Gates loosens and warms-up all the major joints of the body, preparing the body for smooth internal energy or chi flow.

### GATHERING THE CHI

Gathering the Chi is designed to absorb the fresh chi of the morning, get your life force moving in the body after a night of sleep, and to prepare your thoughts for a calm and balanced day.

### EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE

Dating back as far as 2,000 years ago, this popular Chi Kung set has a powerful therapeutic effect in stimulating the central nervous system, lowering blood pressure, relieving stress, toning muscles, enhancing digestion and circulation of blood, and eliminating waste. These eight simple exercises assist in putting the internal strength into your Tai Chi practice.

## TAI CHI CHUAN

### RELAXATION

This is one of the major keys to success in Tai Chi for Health. Only when you are fully relaxed will all the energy channels be open, allowing the chi to flow freely throughout your whole being.

### CENTERING, GROUNDING, BODY ALIGNMENT

These techniques will help you to develop your frame and achieve smooth flowing Tai Chi movement, and are very beneficial for the free passage of chi around the body. Focusing full awareness on the body, breath and mind, and revolving them around your centre of balance at the Lower Dan Tien, with low centre of gravity, while maintaining a centreline.

### LOWER DAN TIEN MEDITATION

The Lower Dan Tien is the energy reservoir in the body, where we store the energy we generate, gather and absorb in Chi Kung and Tai Chi exercises.

### STANDING MEDITATION

This exercise prepares the mind and body for Tai Chi by rooting and sinking the body, calming the mind, and centering the chi at the Lower Dan Tien.

### TAI CHI FOUR CORE MOVEMENTS YANG STYLE

The four cardinal points of the Pa Kua give us the four cardinal energies; Peng, Lu, Ji, An. These four energies applied in movement are the pillars and foundations of Tai Chi. Only by detailed analysis of these four energies and movements can students begin to understand the concepts of this martial art.

### TAI CHI SOLO FORMS YANG STYLE (Short Forms, 24 Forms, Original 13 Postures)

Fundamental to success in Tai Chi for Health is using repetitive movements to train the body through correct body posture, maintaining a centerline and weight distribution. Solo forms are designed to introduce students to 'tranquility in motion' – the art of Tai Chi, by emphasising relaxation, body alignment, balance, focus, slowness and smooth chi flow.

## SITTING CHI KUNG

### STILLNESS MEDITATION

In the great silence we can train the mind to let go of all external influences and thoughts. This process can help you to release mental tension and stress, and relax into the natural experience of peace and harmony.

### OPENING THE HEART MEDITATION

Opening the heart and awakening the compassionate spirit inside is the essence of spiritual progress.

### LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

Cultivating love and kindness, and awakening the compassionate spirit inside is the key to inner peace and happiness.

### SIX HEALING SOUNDS MEDITATION

The Taoist way of dealing with stress is to perform the Six Healing Sounds, which re-energize and cleanse the internal organs by transforming negative emotions into positive energy.

### INNER SMILE MEDITATION

The Inner Smile connects our biological self, our psychological self, and our spiritual self in an effective way. This meditation cultivates our life force energy by using subtle breath and envisioning a smile to each part of our internal universe.

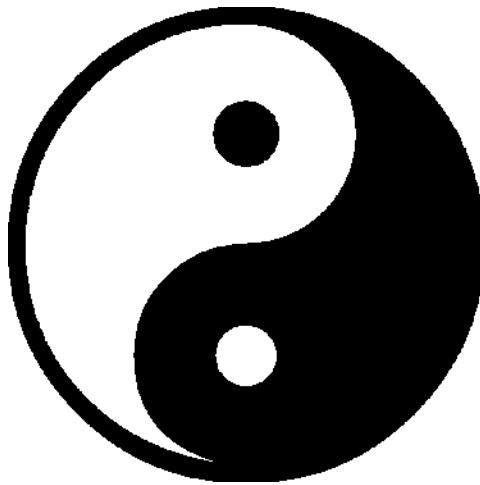
### MICROCOSMIC ORBIT MEDITATION

The Microcosmic Orbit is the main energetic circuit; it feeds all the other channels in the body. Essential to all Tao practices is opening the orbit and removing blockages along its energetic pathway to release more chi to vitalize the entire body.

## GENERAL CAUTION

Consult a medical doctor before starting this exercise programme.

Always remember to exercise in moderation and according to your own capabilities



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is dedicated to the lineage of teachers who preserve the ancient wisdom for the spiritual evolution of mankind. It is written from my own experience and practice, and compiled from training programmes, books and lectures by Master Keith Good, Master Kai, Master Mantak Chia, Master Daniel Li Ox, Master Thip, Bapak Merta Ada, Qu Lei Lei, Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming, Martin F. Moore, and Deng Ming-Dao. Special thanks to all the authors, books, websites, references and excerpts used in this book. It is with the greatest respect and thanks to these teachers that I present this book for your health, happiness and guidance. Tai Chi Chuan is a martial art originally designed for combat. In writing this book I have tried to focus on Tai Chi exercise for developing and maintaining internal health, and all related topics including, Hand Forms, Chi Kung, relaxation and meditation. I have excluded combat, self-defense and Wushu sports unless relevant to health, but maintained the martial intent and application of each form as instructed by my teachers. Intent and application of the Pa Keng is fundamental to understanding the concepts and principles of the Pa Kua, which contain the origin and root philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan. This book has three main goals:

- ☯ Inspiration to develop health, love, wisdom and compassion within ourselves and others
- ☯ Encouragement to rediscover our spiritual unity as it unfolds within us through meditation, mindfulness and moderation
- ☯ Guidance to integrate the philosophy of Tao into our daily life through the study and practice of Chi Kung and Tai Chi Chuan

Dave West  
Bali 2010



MADE IN BALI COPYRIGHT 2010 TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT EDITION

Web: [www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com) Email: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com) Tel: +62 8123 646 7324

This book is created with love and distributed free. It is meant to provide guidance and counsel for those who wish to practise.





# TAI CHI

## DANCE OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

By Dave West      MOUNTAIN RETREAT EDITION      COPYRIGHT 2010 © [www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)

Chapters	Page
INTRODUCTION TO TAI CHI	12
1. HARMONY WITH NATURE	22
2. OPENING THE HEART	27
3. CHI	34
4. YIN AND YANG	41
5. RELAXATION	48
6. CENTERED AND GROUNDED	55
7. CHI KUNG	59
8. TAI CHI EXERCISES	69
9. TAI CHI SOLO FORMS	84
10. TAI CHI FOR HEALTH TRAINING PROGRAM	105
11. TAO TE CHING	112
12. TAI CHI CHUAN CLASSICS	136
13. STORIES AND POEMS FROM LIVING TAO	148
GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES	164



## TAI CHI CHUAN CLASSICS

These classic texts are regarded as the authoritative source on Tai Chi Chuan.

	Page
Treatise on the Symbolism of Tai Chi	43
Treatise on the Pa Kua	47
Song of Push Hands	77
Song of the Thirteen Postures	93
Song of the Eight Gates	99
Tao Te Ching	112
The Six Harmonies	137
The Eight Methods	138
Tai Chi Chuan Ching	139
Treatise on Tai Chi Chuan	140
Commentary on the Tai Chi Chuan Classic	142
Expositions of Insights into the Practice of the Thirteen Postures	142
Five Character Secret	144
Essentials of the Practice of the Form and Push Hands	145
Yang's Ten important Points	146
Song of Form and Function	147



Can you be both martial and spiritual?  
Can you overcome your ultimate opponent?

To be martial requires discipline, courage and perseverance. It has nothing to do with killing. People fail to look beyond this one narrow aspect of being a warrior and so overlook all the other excellent qualities that can be gained from training. A warrior is not a cruel murderer. A warrior is a protector of ideals, principle, and honour. A warrior is noble and heroic. A warrior will have many opponents in a lifetime, but the ultimate opponent is the warrior's own self. Within a fighter's personality are a wide array of demons to be conquered: fear, laziness, ignorance, selfishness, egoism, and so many more. To talk of overpowering other people is inconsequential. To overcome one's own defects is the true nature of victory. That is why so many religions depict warriors in their iconology. These images are not symbols for dominating others. Rather, they are symbols of the ferocity and determination that we need to overcome the demons within ourselves.

Deng Ming-Dao  
365 Tao Daily Meditations

The internal martial art of Tai Chi Chuan is deeply rooted in Tao philosophy. The art emphasizes balancing hard, fast and powerful movements with soft, slow more subtle movements, and also smoothly transitioning between the two. The look and quality of its internal and external movements resembles the ease by which water can effortlessly flow in and around harder surfaces and objects. Tai Chi Chuan is simultaneously a self-defense art, an energy self regulation and healing art and a moving meditation art that develops and refines your spiritual energy. At first, practicing its rhythmic forms and supporting auxiliary exercises emphasizes smooth and continuous energy flow, then secondly at a later stage, the training progresses towards more rigorous methods and speeds as one learns the self-defense aspects and fighting applications. Daily practice greatly strengthens the legs and feet, opens all the joints and energetically grounds your center. The over-all training also greatly increases the life-force, or bio-electric energy, known as Chi, to flow inside the body, boosting your immune system and helping to stabilize your spirit as your body and mind become more integrated.

[www.zeigua.com](http://www.zeigua.com)

Taoist cosmology says Tai Chi is born out of Wu Chi. In stillness Yin and Yang unite and Tai Chi is born. In movement they separate and duality arises, and reversal occurs. From the stillness of the mind control the movement of the body through feeling. When you think, you disconnect from the body. When you feel you are one with the body. With the mind in the body through feeling you have real time control of the body. The moment you slip into thought you disconnect from the body and lose control. Wu Chi, or emptiness, the void, in this case, does not mean being void of feeling or empty of sensation. The dual aspect of the mind must be transcended in order to experience stillness which rests upon nothingness. The mind can think or feel. However, it cannot do both at once. Thought excites and fragments the mind producing more thought which then distracts further from feeling. Only with a still mind that is free of thought can one gain control and be at one with movement.

[www.taichithailand.com](http://www.taichithailand.com)



# INTRODUCTION TO TAI CHI



When the mind is disciplined and expanded by study, the remarkable harmonies of nature will become plain. One has to fill oneself with knowledge like a vessel. Upon the knowledge gained, the indwelling truth would act like a yeast, forcing the mind to assume its original perfect shape.

Confucius, 551 - 479 B.C.

The use of exercises, calisthenics, stretching, and breathing exercises to maintain good health, fight disease, and enhance the quality of life is of great antiquity. Human beings have always enjoyed sports, games, exercise and play - it is essential to being human, a creature that plays - homo ludens. The use of exercises to revitalize one's health and prevent disease has a long documented history in both India and China. Artwork, medical manuals, folklore, treatises, scriptures and reports on the subject go back over 4,000 years. Likewise, military physical conditioning techniques and training with military weapons; bow, sword, staff, knife, spear, etc., are of comparable antiquity. Over many centuries in China, traditional medical practices; e.g., acupuncture, herbalism, massage, and exercise routines, etc, were combined with esoteric and magical Taoist practices, and with military training techniques. In addition, trade and cultural exchanges between India and China transferred Buddhist theory and practices, Taoism, Yoga, medicinal herbs, medical techniques, and martial arts training techniques between the two regions. These methods and practices were explored and adapted in China to help maintain good health, to prevent and cure diseases, to provide martial arts prowess, to restore vitality, and to enhance the spirit of the patient or practitioner. Seeking ways to enjoy a long, healthy, and energetic life are of universal and perennial interest. Making beneficial exercises interesting and enjoyable has always been a challenge to creative people.

Tai Chi is a great low impact exercise that can improve your strength and balance, as well as help to maintain your cardiovascular health. Rooted in the martial arts, Tai Chi is classified as a soft or internal part of the Neijia (Wudang) branch of Chinese martial arts. Like many movements that started in the distant past, the history of Tai Chi is shrouded in mystery and legend. Some trace the origins of Tai Chi to immortal Taoist gods; some to the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu (600 BC), who is also credited as having contributed to classic Chinese texts such as Tao Te Ching and I Ching along with Chuang Tzu and other unknown masters of Taoism. These writings are the basis of the Tao, and the philosophical approach and foundation of Tai Chi.

A mythical Shaolin monk named Chang San-feng (1300 AD) is often credited with creating the first Tai Chi movements. Chang had a vision about a crane attacking a snake. From his vision Chang learned that brute force could be countered with graceful movements, which on the surface seem yielding. This led to the development of the Original Thirteen Postures. However, other historians believe that Tai Chi was first created during the Ming Dynasty by the legendary general Chen Wang-ting (1600 AD) in the Chen family village, and that Chen style is the original form of Tai Chi. Wang Tsung-yueh (1750 AD) may have been the next person who had an impact on the history of Tai Chi. Wang is said to be the first person to call the art 'Tai Chi Chuan' means 'Grand Ultimate Fist and to have developed the choreography between the Original Thirteen Postures.

Around 1850 AD the 'Invincible Yang Lu-chang' is said to have created the Yang Style of Tai Chi from the original Chen style. His grandson Yang Cheng-fu (1900 AD) is responsible for popularising Tai Chi all over China. Following in his grandfather's footsteps, Yang Cheng-fu focused on health and fitness, and emphasised self-defense, balance, flexibility and speed. Since the 1950's, Yang Style Tai Chi standardized sets have been integrated into the Chinese

national healthcare system, and taught in schools for health, sports and competitions. In the 1960s, Cheng Man-ching (1902-1975 AD) a student of Yang Cheng-fu, was among the first to take Tai Chi to the USA. Today, Tai Chi groups can be seen practising early in the morning in parks all over the world for wellbeing and inner peace.

Tai Chi as it is practiced today can be traced back to five families. Each family developed their own form of Tai Chi, keeping their individual forms secret from outsiders. Today's styles are derived from these original family forms: the Chen style, the Yang style, the Sun style, the Wu Hao style of Wu Yu-hsiang and the Wu style of Wu Ch'uan-yu and Wu Chien-ch'uan. The most popular form of Tai Chi Chuan is derived from the Yang style.

## **THE FIVE PILLARS OF TAI CHI CHUAN**

The practical side of the art of Tai Chi Chuan consists of five basic components which are very much interrelated. In accordance with the teachings of Yang Cheng-fu, this course is designed to help you improve your health and vitality by concentrating on Hand Forms and Internal Strength including Chi Kung. The Five Pillars of classical Tai Chi Chuan are:

### **1. HAND FORM**

The Hand Form, also known as the Solo Form, is the most basic, as well as the best known, of the five component parts of Tai Chi Chuan, but knowledge of this alone is insufficient for self-defense purposes. There are two stages in learning the Hand Form. At first we learn the movements in a simplified, step by step, way known as the Square Form. This can be compared to teaching a child to write, in that he will be taught first to form block letters. Only when we have mastered this simple method of doing the form can we move on to learn the more intricate Round Form, which consists of the same techniques as the Square Form, but which is performed in a free and flowing manner. The Round Form is to the Square Form as cursive script is to block letters. The movements of the Hand Form come in a set sequence, and all have a self-defense application. Slow and gentle practice of the Hand Form by concentrating on the movements will result in tranquillity of mind, help relax the body and improve respiration.

### **2. INTERNAL STRENGTH**

Internal Strength can be described as meditation combined with exercise. Though we are concentrating on maintaining a tranquil state of mind, we are at the same time holding set postures or repeating set movements which are designed to increase our health and strength, and to give us a well-coordinated body that is full of energy.

### **3. PUSHING HANDS**

The purpose of Pushing Hands is to train us in methods of applying techniques to disrupt our opponent's center of gravity. Such training will also increase our sensitivity and improve our reactions. Pushing Hands is the key to learning the Self-Defense techniques.

### **4. SELF-DEFENSE**

Once we have reached a certain standard in the Pushing Hands, we can then move on to learn the Self-Defense techniques. These are modified techniques taken from the Hand Form. Practice with a partner is necessary to develop our ability in using these techniques to defend ourselves and to counter-attack our opponent. We must make these techniques second nature to us, so that in a real situation we will react instinctively and decisively.

### **5. WEAPONS**

Weapons are also a Solo Form. The three weapons used in Tai Chi Chuan are the straight sword, sabre and spear. Some instructors teach the Fan which is also included under weapons. They are usually taught after a certain degree of proficiency has been achieved in the Hand Form and the techniques of Pushing Hands and Self-Defense. The techniques of the Weapon Forms can be adapted for combat purposes in the same way as the techniques of the Hand Form.



## TAO

China's oldest system of philosophy and holistic practice is Taoism. Tao is the path of wisdom and virtue, the way of nature, and is the root of all philosophy and practice of Tai Chi. Tao is the unity of all things interconnected and flowing in harmony with the laws of the universe. From Tao wisdom came the Pa Kua, the eight trigrams, which represents the eight realities, or changes in the universe. In the Tao Te Ching and I Ching, Tao emphasises wisdom, peace and spiritual living through the principles found in nature of Yin and Yang, which symbolise fullness and emptiness, equals and opposites, change and reversal. It is on these foundations that all styles of Tai Chi are based.

Taoists observe that we are part of the natural world, we are born of the energy of the earth and stars and elements. Yet, for some reason we forget our place in nature, and so we need to reclaim our rightful heritage as children of the Earth. Just as the universe is an integrated whole, the body is an integrated whole with each part connected to and dependant on the other parts. Yet as we become adults leading sedentary lives, we often forget to use all the other parts of our bodies. We depend on the head and arms, using the spine, hips, and legs only to get us from the car to the elevator to the swivel chair, where we can use the head and arms again. By restricting our movement, we forget how to move strongly, lithely and efficiently. When we forget how to live fully in our bodies, we overly restrict the way we move, and eventually we forget who we really are. Taoism involves many practical disciplines that can restore our lost youth, energy, and virtues while awakening our deepest potentials. Tai Chi is just one of the many practices that can help us to maintain health and learn universal truths if we are willing to open our minds.

The Tao Te Ching and I Ching enunciated the principles of Tao. Selflessness is an important characteristic of a person who follows the way of the Tao. You must learn to go with the flow. Polarities of Yin and Yang exist everywhere in nature, E.g. Heaven and earth, man and woman, sun and moon. There is a constant cycle of change as in the Tai Chi symbol, where yang starts out as a small tail and expands to a full orb with a dot of yin; then small yin develops to full yin with a dot of yang. In Tai Chi the empty foot is Yin and the heavy, firm foot is Yang until the weighting changes and the relationship is reversed. The real contribution of the Tao has been to the inner life of man. It has various schools of nonbeing, nonaction, inner and outer elixir, which point to the fact that man must understand himself before he can understand the world.

Meditation is therefore key as one learns to focus and direct energies, which are usually squandered by the five senses. The movements of the arms and legs in Tai Chi, along with the turns and posturing of the body, help to picture the flow of chi during meditation. Also, the very structure of the hexagrams can be used to picture the human body, the two top lines being head, the middle lines being chest, and the bottom two being the lower part of the body. The I Ching itself can be read as a manual describing the course of the chi in meditation and as a guide to the temptations and goals of the meditator.

Over the millennia, Taoism has meant different things to different people. According to orientalist John Blofeld, scholars identified it with the philosophies of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. To most ordinary folk, Taoism was a loose agglomeration of shamanistic and occult practices. Taoists who wanted to rejuvenate their bodies and prolong their lives combined philosophy and practice with the secrets of internal alchemy. And to mystics seeking union with the Sublime, the Tao was the esoteric heart of all those teachings. Tao can mean the undifferentiated unity from which the universe evolved, or the supreme creative and sustaining power that nourishes all creatures. It can mean the way nature operates as well as the course or path we should follow in order to rise above mundane life and achieve enlightenment. Taoist philosophers see the world and everything in it as a seamless web of

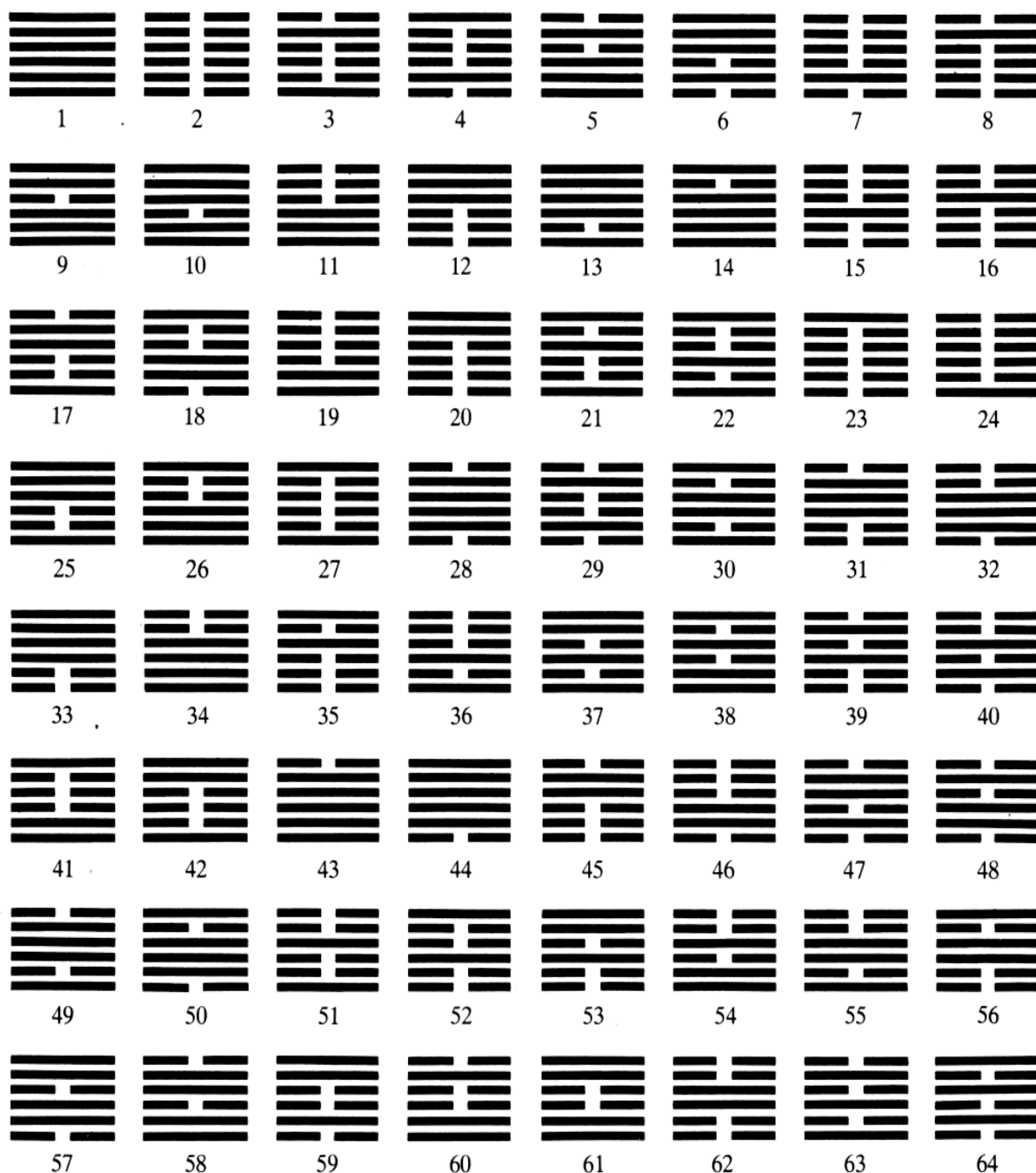
unbroken movement and change. What look to us like separate entities - people, animals, events, thoughts - are really just temporary patterns and wave in a dynamic flux. The aim of Taoist spiritual practice is to recognize and cultivate the harmony inherent in this flux, inherent in every dynamic situation or relationship: between oneself and the Earth, between oneself and others, and between the emotions and energies within oneself. Pursuit of inner harmony has led to great spiritual accomplishment in some, tranquillity and peace of mind in others, and supernatural powers, used for good or ill, in still others.

The emperors of China traditionally were fascinated with the Taoist's reputation for seeing into the minds of others, controlling the weather, and in some cases manipulating or harming others at a distance. They would attempt to cajole and sometimes force their Taoist advisors to use their magical powers for political ends. An unfortunate effect of this was that great secrecy and intrigue grew up around the Taoist practices. Although Taoist philosophy has long been available to us through translations of Lao Tzu and books about Chinese history and culture, the specific techniques of its alchemy have been kept as closely guarded secrets, passed from master to student only after years of preparation and initiation. The original esoteric system was often taught only piecemeal, lest any one individual become too powerful. Communist suppression of religion in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century forced many Taoists underground or to Taiwan. As a result, the teachings became scattered or were held secret by a select few.



## I CHING

China's oldest surviving book is the I Ching, or Book of Changes. Legends tell us that the book was written by the Chinese Emperor Fu Hsi (2953-2838 B.C.). Others date it from the Zhou Dynasty (1100-1221 B.C.). It is also probable that the I Ching originated from a prehistoric divination technique which dates at least as far back as 5000 B.C. By studying and observing heaven, earth, animal tracks and his own body, Fu Hsi devised the broken and unbroken line as symbols of the fundamental nature of the universe. From these he constructed eight trigrams, each of which stood for an aspect of nature, society, and the individual. Each trigram is composed of three lines, solid lines are yang, broken lines are yin. There are 8 possible combinations of three broken and solid lines and became known as the Pa Kua. The 64 Hexagrams that make up the I Ching are composed of pairs of trigrams



found in the Pa Kua (8 x 8). Each of the basic forms in Tai Chi Chuan has a hexagram in the I Ching relating to it. These hexagrams were assigned in the books Tai Chi Chuan and I Ching by Da Liu, and Tai Chi According to the I Ching by Stuart Alve Olson.

Growing far beyond a mere method for prophesy, the interactions of Yin and Yang represented by the 64 hexagrams in the I Ching along with their interpretations have had a profound and enduring influence on almost every aspect of Chinese culture, philosophy, religion, medicine, even architecture. It is common for such martial arts as Tai Chi Chuan and Ba Gua Zhang to be defined in terms of the various trigrams and hexagrams and their relationships as explored in the I Ching. The I Ching is one of the first efforts of the human mind to place itself in the universe. A collection and interpretation of 64, 6-line figures, it has exerted a living presence in China for three thousand years. The I Ching gives advice on matters such as philosophy, divination, government, numerology, astrology, cosmology, marriage, business, farming, meditation and military strategy.



## SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF TAI CHI FOR HEALTH

- 1. LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE**  
Contemplation and appreciation of the natural world.
- 2. OPENING THE HEART**  
Cultivating loving kindness and awakening the compassionate spirit.
- 3. CHI – ENERGY OF LIFE**  
Gathering the chi using meditation, exercise, breath, diet and positive thinking.
- 4. YIN YANG THEORY**  
Distinguishing between fullness, emptiness, change and reversal, to create harmony and balance.
- 5. RELAXING THE MIND, BREATH AND BODY**  
Total mind-body-breath concentration, relaxation and unity to increase chi flow through the meridians.
- 6. CENTRED AND GROUNDED**  
Slow movements from our centre with feet firmly rooted into the ground, and low centre of gravity.
- 7. SOLO FORMS**  
Effortless movement through inner structural harmony with the forces of Heaven and Earth.

These Seven Principles distinguish Tai Chi as the highest system of health and internal martial arts practised in China today. Cultivating these principles guides the peaceful warrior to awakening the compassionate spirit inside. They are the keys to health, inner peace and happiness, and the essence of spiritual progress. These principles can only be understood through intuitive transformation, and incorporating Yin Yang and Chi theory into daily life. By removing the obstacles clouding our consciousness we once again connect to our original insight. This allows us to see clearly and understand the workings and wonders of the cosmos. This requires mental, physical and spiritual training and adjustment, which can only be achieved through regular practise under the guidance of an experienced master.

## **BASIC ELEMENTS OF TAI CHI**

Tai Chi Chuan has its roots in the eight trigrams of the Pa Kau (opposite) and the Tao wisdom found within. It was originally developed as an internal martial art for self-defence. Today, however, Tai Chi has been divided into three divisions. They are; Health, Sport, and Combat. Although they all contain the basic elements of Tai Chi Chuan, each division emphasises certain aspects over others. The basic elements of all divisions of Tai Chi include concentrating the mind and chi; relaxing in movement while distinguishing the full (Yang) and the empty (Yin); keeping the body rooted to the ground and the centre of gravity low; keeping the bone structure aligned with the forces of Heaven and Earth, and transferring the Earth force through the bone structure into a single point of discharge; allowing the chi to circulate and move the muscles, bones, and tendons in slow coordinated movements; moving smoothly and continuously with total body integration. The aim of this book is to inspire you to develop a daily practice and holistic lifestyle that creates positive changes in all aspects of life. With regular practise, the slow and graceful movements, gentle breathing and peaceful meditation of Tai Chi guides the healing energy of nature to flow freely throughout our body, mind and spirit. Practising Tai Chi creates a natural force field around us that recharges our whole being with positive energy and vitality, keeping us healthy and strong. By harmonising body, breath, mind, spirit and natural energy, we can learn to be mindful of all thoughts, speech and actions. With regular practise Tai Chi helps us to create love, wisdom and compassion in everyday life as we return to living in peace and harmony with the natural world. Today, peaceful styles of Tai Chi are practised by millions of people around the world for balancing internal energy, vitality and spiritual wellbeing.

## **BENEFITS OF TAI CHI**

The Tai Chi model is based on the premise that there is a bio energy system in the body. This bio energy, or Chi, gets carried round the body in energy channels called meridians - a bit like the way the veins carry blood around the body. There are 12 main meridians and 8 secondary meridians carrying Chi throughout the body and through the major organs. Interrupted, weak or blocked flow of chi causes illness. Tai Chi works because the muscle movements in the exercises are designed to stimulate the flow of chi through the body and the major organs. When Chi flows smoothly people are well. Other Tai Chi and Chi Kung exercises involve the cultivation or growth and storage of Chi leading to longer life, better health and faster recovery from accidents. From the Chi perspective all health conditions - even the most serious can be treated and improved with Chi Kung. The Tai Chi Forms provide the same kind of stimulation for the meridian systems.

A western perspective might focus on the purely mechanical effects of Tai Chi practice. The emphasis on correct body posture and spinal alignment while practicing Tai Chi releases tension and pressure caused by slumping, and improved posture improves the digestive system and removes stress from the back. Moving weight from leg to leg is common to many Tai Chi exercises, as is extending and lifting the arms, legs and hands. All these different Tai Chi moves have one thing in common; they vary the load on joint surfaces increasing the flow of natural lubricant and nutrients into the joint, meaning that they move more easily and freely. The flowing movements of a typical Tai Chi routine disguise the incredibly high number of joint rotations that are being used. The neck will move from side to side, palms will turn over; elbows and shoulders will rotate all increasing flexibility and range of motion of the joints. At the same time the muscles, ligaments and tendons that protect and support the joints are being strengthened which keeps them mobile and healthy. All this while you are simply enjoying and doing your Tai Chi exercises.

As a preventative measure regular practice of Tai Chi will mean that you will be less likely to become stiff and in pain due to the onset of things like lumbago, arthritis and sciatica. And then there's the psychological benefits gained by the unique mind/body link in Tai Chi



exercises. As you direct your mind to focus on the moves you will find that you have screened out all the distractions resulting in inner peace and mental relaxation. Immediate benefits from practising Tai Chi tend to be a clearer and more relaxed mind, which can happen on day one.

Research at the Beijing College of Traditional Chinese Medicine has found that regularly practising Tai Chi and Chi Kung promotes personal energy for self healing and wellbeing. Clinical studies in the USA report improved balance and peace of mind after only 8 weeks of a very simple set of movements taken from a variety of Tai Chi styles. Other, less expected, benefits of Tai Chi include improved working of internal organs, better breathing and finding it easier to sleep at night. People report more strength, stamina and suppleness as a direct result of doing their Tai Chi. And for others Tai Chi benefits come in the form of reduced stress, and an improved ability to deal with difficult situations.

The primary reason to study these arts is to improve our daily life. Our practice and study of these arts is only a starting point. Our goal is to take these principles into our daily life to improve the quality of our life, nurture excellence, and help create a positive future. The teaching here is principle based, not form stylized. I see Qi Gong, Taiji, Bagua, and Xing Yi as elements of the internal arts. Though each art has a complete curriculum, each is only one aspect when referring to the internal arts. As a student of several forms of Bagua and Taiji I see each as one view of the art. My goal is to understand the art, not the various views. We do not support or promote the sport, fighting, or performance oriented versions of the internal martial arts.

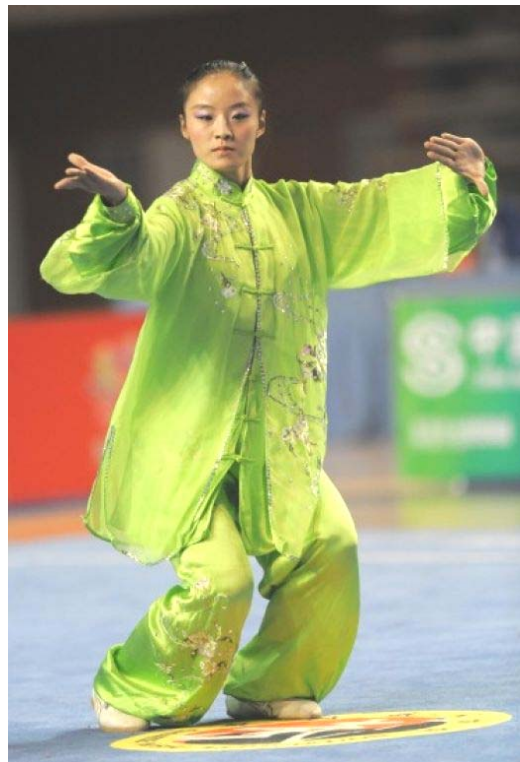
A.T.Dale

## CHI KUNG

Chi Kung training is an important part of Tai Chi Chuan. It is deeply rooted in the philosophy and principles of Taoism and Chinese medicine, where it is believed that most diseases and illnesses plaguing human beings are primarily caused by their unnatural ways of living and improper use of Chi (life-force, bio-electric energy, or breath power). For millennia, Chi Kung practices have been successfully used in very safe and reliable ways by millions of people throughout the world, to help prevent energy imbalances and maintain one's health and vitality.

Chi Kung, also called Qigong, is a thousands of years old health and wellness breathing method from ancient China, that's used for enlivening, storing and managing one's bio-electric energy fields, also referred to as our Life-force or Chi. Most Chi Kung practices are practical and simple, helping to train individuals to relax their minds in order to conscientiously guide the process of synchronizing gentle movements with whole body breathing.

Legends tell that Chi Kung was originally discovered by mountain dwelling Taoist monks more than 8,000 years ago. Chi Kung is a complete energy science and art that teaches individuals how to mindfully breathe more fully from all parts of their bodies, especially from the energy/balance center called the tantien (elixir field), specifically located in the lower part of the abdomen just slightly below your navel. Also, because of these combined efforts of doing



mindful breathing while performing more natural movement can better integrate the body and calm the mind, daily Chi Kung practice can also naturally increase one's awareness of spiritual energy, without having to believe or practice in any one particular religion. These fluid and graceful exercises are religiously neutral and can be easily incorporated into one's own unique belief system, complementing most progressively minded traditional religions.

Chi Kung practice is usually performed by holding specific static upperbody postures and or by moving in rhythmic ways while: lying down, seated, standing and or walking. These gentle yet powerful exercises can greatly help restore one's original essence by purge-out accumulated toxins and converting stagnant negative forces into cleaner more dynamic energy, leaving the body feeling lighter, recharged and more vibrant. And traditionally, Chi Kung training has always been at the root of many of the more enlightened martial arts systems and genuine healing and spiritual traditions of Asian.

Regularly exercising in open-air parks, getting enough rest, eating locally sourced fresh whole living foods raw and or very lightly cooked, maintaining a positive attitude, having fewer thoughts in one's mind, eliminating toxic relationships and instead cultivating quality friendships, can greatly help to prevent illness and disease. And, by making some of these simple lifestyle changes in conjunction with daily Chi Kung practice, one will gain a higher quality of life and set the foundation for true health and balance.

If you become imbalanced from living unnaturally, Chi Kung practice can help reset your energy fields and help prevent any further damage. This is primarily accomplished through strengthening one's Yi (mind-intention) by using Chi Kung's deep abdominal breathing methods, where a fuller breath can be achieved by learning to soften the muscles of belly and then using them more so than your chest area, while breathing in and out. Even though qigong is more than capable of rebalancing and even in some cases reversing terminal diseases, it is always wiser to prevent a malady than to repair it: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

### TAO AND YOGA

Like meditational Indian yogis. Taoists cultivate the subtle life force and recognize various kinds and levels of chi. The goals of both systems are the same; perfect health, spiritual growth and ultimately, enlightenment. In other ways, however, Taoist practices differ from the Indian system. For one thing Taoists do not see the body and its pleasures as maya, or illusion. But rather as a valuable storehouse of energy and impulses, Physical pleasure is not to be transcended immediately, but first cultivated and utilized, and then transcended only in the final stage of development. Taoist also do not use subtle vibrational methods, such as mantras and visualizations, to transform gross emotions and impulses into higher, spiritual ones. Rather, they use subtle energies to awaken even subtler and more powerful energies, which are used in turn to awaken yet more refined and powerful energies.

In Taoist practices, the idea of growing new subtle bodies for spiritual purposes sounds very much like the yogic belief, which is shared by some Western metaphysical schools, that we have different subtle sheaths, or bodies, on different dimensions - the emotional astral body, the mental body, the causal body, the soul body, and so on. As we grow spiritually, these higher bodies are said to awaken from their latency, and we begin to inhabit them more, and our physical bodies less.

Another major difference between the Tao and Vedanta systems is that the Taoist do not combine Chi cultivation with devotion to a teacher. Taoist students do not seek the teacher's grace or power for spiritual awakening, but rather look to the master for instruction on how to awaken their own latent energy potential. Taoist teachers may direct some of their own Chi into a student's meridians to give a momentary boost, during the

Microcosmic Orbit meditation, for example. But one need not surrender one's will to the master, or create an alliance of devotion and dependence.

Yogis and Taoists also slightly differ in their technique of kundalini energy. Over many years, certain yogic meditation practices are said to arouse this latent energy, causing it to ascend through the central subtle channel in the body, piercing and opening each chakra as it rises, until it fuses with the crown chakra at the top of the head. So powerful is this arousal that practitioners, particularly those without adequate instruction or guidance, occasionally undergo a kundalini crisis, an arousal that has apparently gone awry. People in crisis may experience hallucinations, intense and unpleasant physical sensations, or uncontrollable rushes of energy or emotion. A simple explanation for such problems may be that in commercial yoga classes the energy is being improperly channelled. Advanced Taoist and Yoga masters know that running energy from the tailbone to the crown is only completing half the circuit. Since the head and brain are hot and the tailbone is cold, so much heat accumulates that the person becomes extremely uncomfortable, and may cause internal damage. The Taoists believe that the hot energy should be cooled off by its route through the lower part of the body. Through the Microcosmic Orbit Meditation, to achieve a balanced spiritual development, one shouldn't just go to Heaven in the crown chakra, but one should also come back to Earth in the root chakra, thus maintaining a perfect equilibrium between the two components while still in physical existence. However, this can also be found in advanced yogic practices known as Tantric Kriya, where the energy is directed up the front of the body through the Arohan channel to the crown chakra, and then down the spine to the root chakra through the Awarohan channel. With the exception that this yogic practice circulates in the opposite direction to the Taoist practice, these two techniques are almost the same.

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.

The Art of Living, Zen Buddhist Text





A long time ago on the banks of the Yellow River the people of ancient China lived in harmony and balance with nature. They learned many things from the natural world, and understood that nature plays an important role in keeping us healthy, relaxed and happy. They became known as Taoists because they followed the philosophy of Tao – the way of nature, wisdom and virtue. Through the study of nature they discovered the principle of Yin and Yang – harmony and balance, change and reversal, and that the simplicity, perfection and beauty of nature teach us how to live long and healthy lives. Tao teaches that in nature there is a powerful healing energy known as Chi - the energy of life. Chi is all around us; in the garden, on the beaches, in the forest and mountains, and in all life.

Later, in the Wudang Mountains, Taoist monks studied and experimented with chi and developed Chi Kung - natural energy exercises, which may have been practised for over 3000 years to promote health and inner peace. From Chi Kung came Tai Chi – the supreme ultimate exercise. Tai Chi combines Chi Kung, martial arts and the study of animals and birds to create a dance of energy. Tai Chi is a set of slow movements, gentle breathing and relaxing meditation that guides the healing energy of nature to flow freely throughout our body, mind and spirit. Regular practise of Tai Chi creates a natural force field all around us that recharges our whole being with positive energy and vitality and keeps us healthy and strong. By harmonising body, breath, mind, spirit and natural energy, Tai Chi helps us to create love, wisdom and compassion in everyday life.

### THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

The philosophy of Tao encourages us to spend as much time as we can in nature, absorbing its powerful healing energy, and appreciating and contemplating the simplicity and beauty of the nature world. Relaxing in nature helps us to become grounded and centred. By emptying our mind of problems and stress we can fill it with new understanding and knowledge. Then, we can bring this new sense of calm and wisdom into our everyday life with a relaxed mind, positive thinking and creativity. In the stillness of nature your mind can make many new discoveries. Try these simple exercises and experience the healing power of nature for yourself.

## TAO NATURE MEDITATIONS

### **EXERCISE 1. Just Sitting**

Sitting quietly in nature and doing nothing may be a challenge for some people, especially those who are always on the go. But sitting quietly is very helpful for learning Tai Chi and for a calmer life in general. When Relax your body, relax your breathing, and relax your mind. Don't think of anything in particular, but don't try to stop thinking either. Just let go and sit quietly in nature for about 10 minutes. You may notice that your mental activity slows down and as you become more relaxed. Then move on to the following exercises:

### **EXERCISE 2. Contemplating Nature - Flower**

Sit in front of a beautiful flower. Closely examine the fine detail and shades of colour. Imagine what it might be like to be this flower.

### **EXERCISE 3. Contemplating Nature - Clouds**

Lay on your back looking up at the clouds as they roll by. Watch as their shapes change with every second. Imagine what it might be like to be this cloud.

### **EXERCISE 4. Contemplating Nature - Rock**

Sit on a large warm rock looking closely at its texture and grain. Think about how old it might be and how it was formed. Imagine what it might be like to be this rock.

### **EXERCISE 5. Contemplating Nature - Tree**

Sit with your back against an old tree. Close your eyes and feels its ancient energy and vibration. Imagine what it might be like to be this tree.

### **EXERCISE 6. Contemplating Nature - Object**

Find an object in nature that you connect with. Study it carefully and imagine how it might feel to be that object. Examine its simplicity, stillness and its relationship to other objects close by.

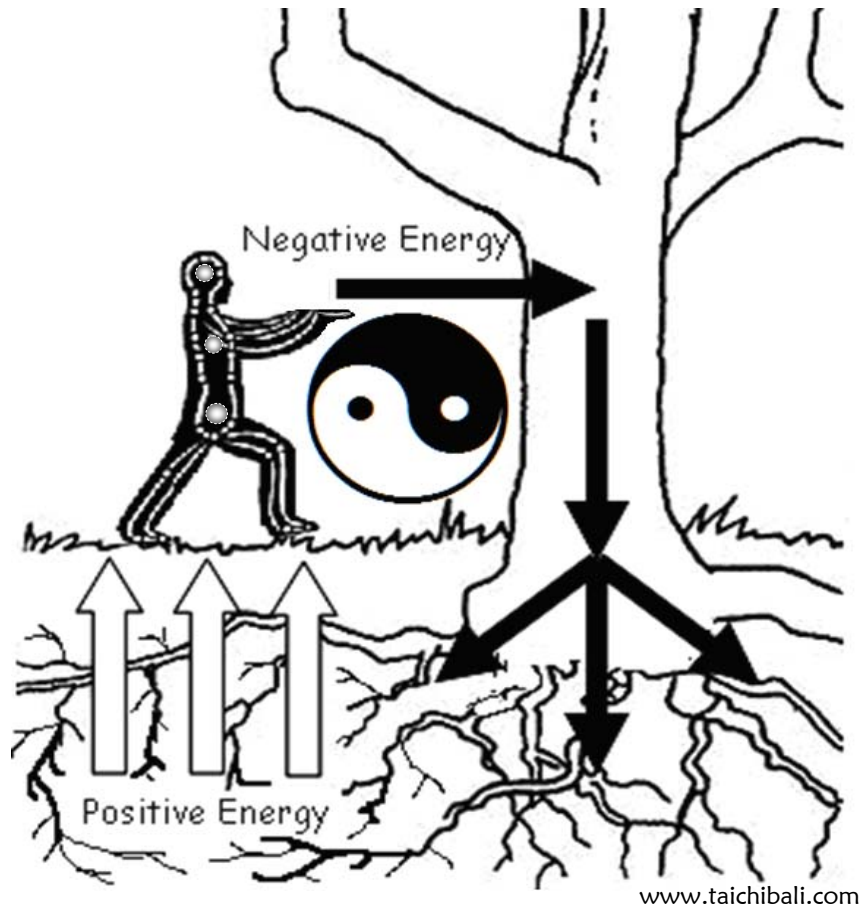
### **EXERCISE 7. Oneness with Nature**

Take a long walk in nature, away from the traffic and bustle of city life. Walk slowly and appreciate the beauty and harmony of the natural world. As you walk take deep gentle breaths and absorb the natural healing energy of your surroundings. After walking deep into the heart of Mother Nature, find a place on the ground, perhaps soft grass where you can sit undisturbed to meditate. You can even lean against a tree or lie down. Find a place that feels right for you. Close your eyes and relax for a few minutes. Let your breathing become comfortable and quiet. Let your thoughts settle. Notice how the ground supports you. Put your palms down on the ground and sense the mass under you. Feel the breeze on your skin, feel the temperature. Notice how you breathe in the air and then expel it out again. Become aware of the exchange with nature that is always going on. Listen to the sounds of nature. Can you hear the wind in the trees, birds chirping, insects? Allow yourself to experience how you are part of this scene, not separate from it but one with nature, one with the universe. Let go of any thoughts about yesterday or tomorrow. Bring yourself to this moment here and now, without any purpose or goal. For this moment, don't think about yourself. Set aside your usual concerns. Be fully in the present moment of being connected with nature. Simply observe the purity and tranquillity of this moment. Feel relaxed and safe, Experience the energy you are made of. Feel what it is like to be you. Experience yourself as the infinite free mind that you are, fearless, healthy and happy. Hold this feeling for a few moments or longer. When you are finished slowly open your eyes. Join your hands over the heart and give thanks for nature, our greatest teacher.

“The stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo survives by bending with the wind.”  
Bruce Lee



# ENERGY CLEANSING WITH TREES



## EXERCISE 8. Energy Cleansing with Trees

This is a great exercise for cleansing the energy of the body, and transforming negative emotions into positive energy, particularly if you are sick or depressed. Find a tree that gives off positive energy. Selecting the proper tree is vital, since there are trees with negative energy. Facing the tree, sink into the Sink Back position with the fingers facing the trees and the weight on the back leg. Breathe in. As you move forward into the Push position breathe out, feel the connection as the negative energy from the fingertips shoots out and connects with the positive energy of the tree. Project out any sick or negative emotions into the tree trunk to be healed and recycled through the roots and into earth. Then, sink back, breathe in and draw in the newly processed positive energy from the Earth up through the feet and legs into your body. Repeat this Yin and Yang action 9 times.

## EXERCISE 9. Sunlight Visualization

Let us finish this chapter with a simple visualization exercise. Stand with your legs shoulder width apart. Close your eyes. Slightly bend your knees. Relax the whole body. Allow your breathing to slow down as it harmonizes with the mind and body. Place the hands over the Lower Dan Tien (5cm below the navel). Visualize you are at a beautiful place. It is a sunny day, the sun is shining all over your body, so you feel warm and relaxed. Smile. Do you hear any sound from that beautiful place? Do you smell any scent from that beautiful place? Feel the energy from the sun vibrate every cell of your body. Visualize yourself immersed in sunlight, and then your whole body gradually become the sunlight. You are the sunlight, the sunlight is you. Hold this feeling for a few minutes or longer. Try this exercise for at least 5 minutes. If you have difficulty visualizing the beautiful place, then take a look at a photo of your beautiful place with your eyes open for at least 1 minutes, and notice all the little details in that photo. Now, close your eyes and you should still be able to retain that

scene with your mind's eye. By visualizing yourself at that beautiful place, you will be able to connect yourself with the chi field of that beautiful place. You may wonder why we visualize ourselves become the sunlight. Maybe we can get some insight from the ancient wisdom of Tao Te Ching verse 7 by Lao Tzu:

Heaven and Earth are eternal.  
Why are they eternal?  
They are unborn, thus they can never die.

Think about it, the sun and our mother earth are always giving out energy and resources to support the lives of every living thing on earth. That is why they can endure and continue for so long. So, if you want to live long and full of energy, we should be like the sun, giving out energy all the time, giving our best to serve others. The universe is very fair, once you give your best, it will reward you abundantly!

When you do the meditations in this chapter often enough, you will gradually build up a strong energy field around you which not only acts like a shield to protect you from the negative energy, but you will also naturally charge up the person around you which means you will have a positive influence on them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Think about it. You are like a big magnet and people around you are like pieces of iron. What happens to iron pieces when they get close to a magnet? They get magnetized and become magnets themselves. When your energy field is strong enough, people like your spouse or your children who do not practice chi kung will benefit from your energy.

The pure man of old slept without dreams and woke without anxiety. He ate without indulging in sweet tastes and breathed deep breaths from the depths of his heels, the multitudes only from their throats.

Chuang Tzu (300 BC)



## **TRAINING GUIDELINES**

Before we continue it is important to have a look at the training guidelines for beginners, and the basic requirements for a successful practice. Following these training guidelines will help you to get the most out of your practice in an effective and safe environment:

### **PRACTISE MINDFULNESS**

Practise mindfulness in all you do. This means being one hundred percent in the present moment and focused on whatever you are thinking, saying or doing. Practise 1 hour of Tai Chi with clear intention and conscious movement. Practice everyday if possible, at sunrise or sunset when the chi is most abundant. If you do not have much time, then practise at least 20 minutes/day.

### **WEAR LOOSE CLOTHING MADE FROM NATURAL FIBER**

This is to ensure easy and comfortable movement without restriction from clothing.

### **THIN SOLED COMFORTABLE SHOES**

A cold surface will draw Chi out of the body, and drain you of energy. A sandy beach does not give enough stability for practising Tai Chi. Use thin soled, comfortable shoes made from natural fibres.

### **RELAXATION**

‘Energy flows in the path of least resistance’. Only when you are fully relaxed in mind, body and breath will all the energy channels be open, allowing the chi to flow freely throughout your whole being. Always begin your practice with Chi Kung relaxation and centering techniques.

### **CHI DIET AND NUTRITION**

Only eat healthy food and drinks. A vegetarian diet is highly recommended for cleansing the body of toxins, and calming the mind. 80% vegetarian and 20% meat is very beneficial. The key is moderation and variety in all things.

### **DRINK AT LEAST TWO LITRES OF WATER PER DAY**

Toxins deep within the tissues of the body are released as a result of practising Chi Kung and Tai Chi. It is very important to irrigate the body with enough water throughout the day to cleanse and refresh the whole system.

### **GET PLENTY OF REST AT NIGHT**

Try to sleep at least seven to eight hours every night. Sleep helps to maintain both psychological and physical balance. When we are deprived of sleep our immune system weakens and concentration drifts. Wake up early and practise Tai Chi at sunrise every day.

### **DO NOT PRACTISE DURING AN ELECTRICAL STORM**

As we become centred and grounded by sinking and rooting the Chi, we become like a natural lightning rod (conductors). Wait until the lightning stops before continuing.



# 2

## OPENING THE HEART 2<sup>nd</sup> Principle of Tai Chi



Opening the heart, cultivating love and kindness, and awakening the compassionate spirit inside our self is the key to inner peace and happiness, and the essence of spiritual progress. Love is a natural occurrence in the world, but bringing it to the forefront of our daily thought, speech and action involves cherishing others more than we cherish our self. This can be achieved through the regular practice of Loving Kindness Meditation and daily mindfulness in all thoughts, speech and actions. Here we can control our ego, eliminate self-importance and selfishness, and consider the happiness of others throughout our daily activities. We all need to heal our life, to understand our sickness, or to heal past traumatic experiences, for example - family, romantic partners, teachers, and other important relationships. Meditation is the ideal place where we can examine these experiences and attitudes, and replace negative attitudes with more positive ones.

When we experience truth, the madness of finding fault with others disappears. Self-exploration through regular meditation allows us to recognise that the faults and failures in our daily life are not in the difficult situations that confront us, or in the people with whom we have to interact. The problems we face arise from within. Circumstances only act as a catalyst to bring them to the surface. This means that everything we feel, think, say, or do is coming up from deep within. Meditation gives us the chance to reflect on this, and apply the necessary changes to take place within us. By letting go of our ego's reactions and practising forgiveness and acceptance we begin to experience pure and



perfect love. We learn to gladly allow the energy of love to circulate and shine through, unobstructed by fear, pain and hatred. The deeper we explore, the more we come to realise a very simple truth: Loving thoughts feel good, and unloving thoughts feel bad. Unloving thoughts are like self-inflicted poison darts, whereas loving thoughts are the natural response to reality when it is clearly perceived. This simple understanding will initiate a natural change of mind that will culminate in the most important theme of Tai Chi, Yoga and all healing arts: Learning to love and be loved. In this way we can begin to discover that suffering is our greatest teacher, and that the suffering in everyday life gives us many opportunities to live the ideal way. When we experience our own suffering it is a difficult time, and we tend to become overwhelmed with grief. But this is also a great opportunity to become stronger, adapt and evolve. In the depths of our suffering we can learn from the past, accept the difficult present and become stronger for the future.

However, when we help others to feel less suffering, less distress from the inevitable negatives of life and the tragic losses and frustrations, the moment we do a positive thing for others without thought or concern for ourselves, in these moments suffering and enlightenment are one. This teaches us not to live apart from the world, but to live a real and active part of it. We discover that enlightenment is not some great cosmic peace trip for monks in caves; it is actually found right in the midst of our daily existence, and that the ultimate ideal of universal compassion can be approached in small ways, not just as all or nothing.

### **EXERCISE 10. Opening the Heart Meditation**

Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine and head straight, but not tense. Relax. Become aware of your heart in the centre of your chest. This is your heart chakra, in Tai Chi it is known as the Middle Dan Tien. It is the centre of your love energy. Your centre of pure love, kindness and compassion. The centre of love for yourself and for others. Your awareness should be so completely centred on the heart that the awareness of the body and the external environment is lost. Feel your heart breathing in and out, freely and easily. As you breathe, feel the heart centre expanding and contracting. Notice how the movement of breath seems to fan and increase these sensations. As you breathe in absorb into your heart as much love energy from your surroundings as you can. With each breath feel more and more love energy entering your heart and body, circulating, healing. Feel your heart centre expanding, filling your whole being. Feel the love energy inside and all around you. Feel as if you are glowing all over with love. Acknowledge this radiant glow of pure love, inside and outside. Hold your awareness of this radiant glow of love for a few minutes or longer. Then move on to the next meditation.

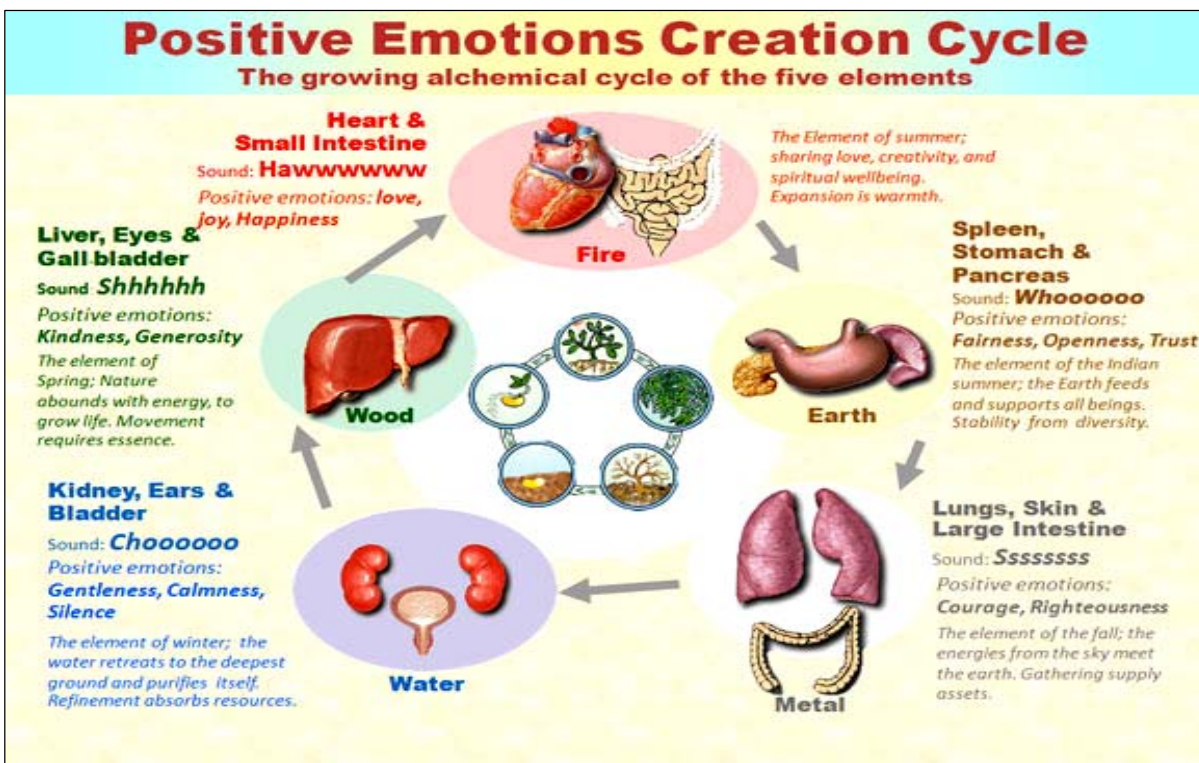
### **EXERCISE 11. Loving Kindness Meditation**

Begin by closing your eyes and relaxing your whole body. Become aware of your heart in the centre of your chest. This is the centre of your love energy. Pure love and kindness. Feel this loving-kindness as a powerful healing energy in the centre of your chest. The centre of loving-kindness for yourself and others. Acknowledge this powerful centre of pure love and kindness. Now send out your loving-kindness to the six directions: From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to your whole being. May I be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything in this room. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything outside this room. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything above you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything below you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything to the right of you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything to the left of you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything in front of you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything behind you. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything on the earth. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to everything in the sky. May all beings be happy. From your heart send out your loving-kindness energy to the whole universe. May all beings be happy. Hold this awareness of kindness for a few minutes or longer.

## **RECYCLING AND TRANSFORMING NEGATIVE ENERGY BY MANTAK CHIA**

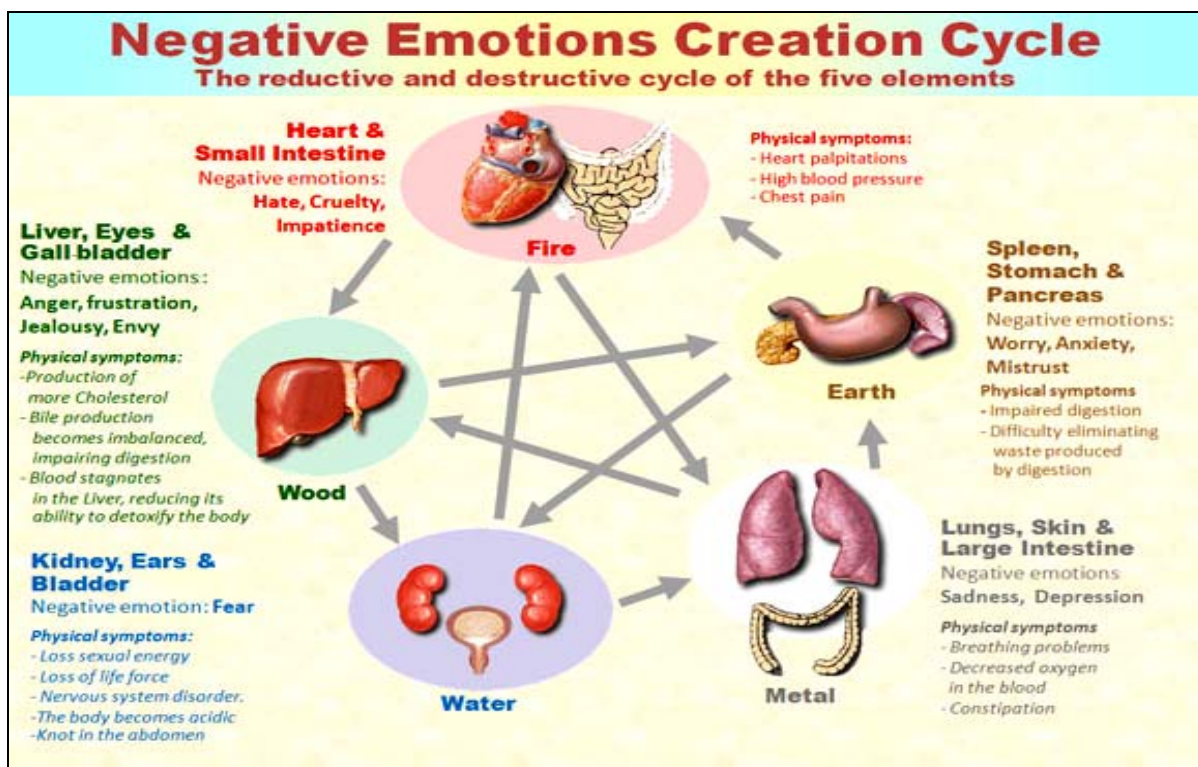
Everything is energy. When Tai Chi Masters confront negative emotional energy, rather than seeking to hide it or to dump it out, they use techniques to transform negative, sick energy, into positive, loving, healing energy. The primary methods employed are The Inner Smile and the Six Healing Sounds. Negative emotions are stored in the body's organs. Over time, the accumulation of the negativity erodes the organs health and effects the person's disposition. The Six Healing Sounds work to transform the negative energy stored in the organs and to transform them into healing light. That works better than holding onto negativity or dumping it out onto someone, because such emotional venting only serves to pass an emotional virus onto another and, via the law of karma, eventually that same negativity will be revisited upon the person who sent it out in the first place. When negative emotional energy is transformed into positive energy, it can be circulated through the meridians, sending healing energy throughout the body.





In the Taoist tradition, positive and negative emotions are associated with the internal organs. One of the keys to good health is to become aware of the emotional energies that reside in the organs, and to transform the negative emotional energies into positive virtues. Taoists believe that we are all born with the virtues of love, gentleness, kindness, respect, honesty, fairness, justice, and righteousness. Unfortunately, as we mature and encounter more stress in our daily lives, negative emotions such as fear, anger, cruelty, impatience, worry, sadness, and grief often predominate.

The negative emotions have negative effects on the internal organs and glands, draining our life-force and undermining our health. In the Tao, emotional intelligence is a process of recognizing emotions by their effects on the body, and employing exercises that transform the negative emotions into positive life force, or Chi. Two important exercises are the Inner Smile and the Six Healing Sounds techniques, as taught by Master Mantak Chia. Taoists learned the relationships between emotional energies and organ systems over many centuries of study and meditation. They developed these methods to transform negative to positive emotions from their practical and intuitive understanding of the human body. Many of the Taoist insights are supported by observations and evidence from modern psychology and medicine. The Inner Smile and Six Healing Sounds exercises focus on five organs or organ systems: the heart, the lungs, the kidneys, the liver/gall bladder, and the stomach/spleen. The Inner Smile and Six Healing Sound exercises direct our attentions to the body's organs and associated qualities. We successively visualize each organ, cleansing the organ and transforming negative emotional energies into positive virtues. In the Taoist tradition, each person assumes responsibility for the emotions that arise within, regardless of the external events that trigger the emotions. Taoist exercises take us into our bodies and transform emotions by transforming the associated physiological systems. The Inner Smile and Six Healing Sounds exercises help balance and integrate our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, promoting health, resilience, and vitality



### SIX HEALING SOUNDS BY MANTAK CHIA

Just about everybody in the modern world has to deal with some sort of stress. Health professionals have placed stress as an underlying factor in a wide range of diseases. The Taoist way of dealing with stress is to perform the Six Healing Sounds. The Six Healing Sounds are so simple and easy to perform that they seem almost too good to be true. I have found the Six Healing Sounds to be the most valuable technique of all the many spiritual practices I've learned so far. A lot of techniques require months and years of practice before any noticeable results occur. Thankfully, that's not the case with the Six Healing Sounds. They work first time, every time. Along with the Inner Smile, the Six Healing Sounds should be practiced daily. Regular practice recycles more and more negative energy. Negative emotions need not be dreaded, for with the use of the Six Healing Sounds they can easily be transformed into refreshing vital force.

### EXERCISE 12. Six Healing Sounds

#### The Lungs Sound

Fear is stored in the lungs. The lung sound transforms fear into courage. Sit on the edge of your chair with feet shoulder length apart. Place hands palms-up on your thighs. As you inhale raise both hands above your head, palms-up, with fingertips of each hand facing the tip of the other. Look up. Place your tongue behind your closed teeth and, with a long slow exhalation, make the lung sound **SSSSSSSSSSSS** (like the sound of steam from a radiator). Return your hands to the palms-up position on your lap and smile to your lungs. Imagine a white light shining upon your lungs, surrounding them. Concentrate on feeling the virtue and power of courage. Repeat this exercise three times.

#### The Kidneys Sound

The kidneys sound transforms the emotional energy inside the kidneys into gentleness and generosity. Sit on the edge of your chair with feet shoulder length apart. Place hands palms-up on your thighs. Lean forward and clasp your hands around your knees. As you inhale look up. Form an "O" with your lips as if preparing to blow out a candle. With a long, slow exhalation make the sound **CHOOOOOOOOO**. Sit up slowly and return your hands to the palms-up position on your lap and smile to your kidneys. Imagine a blue light shining upon

your kidneys, surrounding them. Concentrate on feeling the virtue and power of gentleness and generosity. Repeat this exercise three times.

### **The Liver Sound**

The liver sound transforms the emotional energy inside the liver into kindness. Sit on the edge of your chair with feet shoulder length apart. Place hands palms-up on your thighs. As you inhale raise your hands palms-up over your head and interlock your fingers. Lean slightly to the left. Look up. Place the tongue near the palate and, with a long, slow exhalation make the sound **SHHHHHHHHHH**. Return your hands to the palms-up position on your lap and smile to your liver. Imagine a green light shining upon and inside your liver, surrounding it. Concentrate on feeling the virtue and power of kindness. Repeat this exercise three times.

### **The Heart Sound**

The heart sound transforms the emotional energy inside the heart into love, joy and happiness. Sit on the edge of your chair with feet shoulder length apart. Place hands palms-up on your thighs. As you inhale raise your hands palms-up over your head and interlock your fingers. Lean slightly to the right. Look up. With the mouth wide open, exhale a deep breath slowly and make the sound **HAAAAAAWWW**. Return your hands to the palms-up position on your lap and smile to your heart. Imagine a red light shining upon and inside your heart, surrounding it. Concentrate on feeling the virtue and power of love, joy and happiness. Know that the red light is burning away and transmuting any hatred emotion or self-pity into the virtue emotions. Repeat this exercise three times.

### **The Spleen Sound**

The spleen sound transforms the emotional energy inside the spleen into openness, fairness and justice. Sit on the edge of your chair with feet shoulder length apart. Place hands, fingers of each hand touching the others, palms-up, under your left ribcage. Inhale and with breath held, slightly push the sides of your hands in and slightly up, under the rib. While moving the hands under the ribs, place the tongue near the palate, and with a long, slow exhalation, make the sound **WHOOOOOOO** from the throat, like the sound of an owl. Return your hands to the palms-up position on your lap and smile to your spleen. Imagine a yellow light shining upon and inside your spleen and pancreas, surrounding them. Concentrate on the virtue and power of openness, balance and fairness. Repeat this exercise three times.

### **The Triple Warmer Sound**

Lie flat on your back, if possible. With your mouth open, exhale slowly as you make the sound **HEEEEEEEEEEE**. Imagine a huge rolling pin flattening out your body from the forehead down to the toes. This will balance all the energies activated by the other sounds and help relax the body fully. Repeat this exercise three times.

## **INNER SMILE BY MANTAK CHIA**

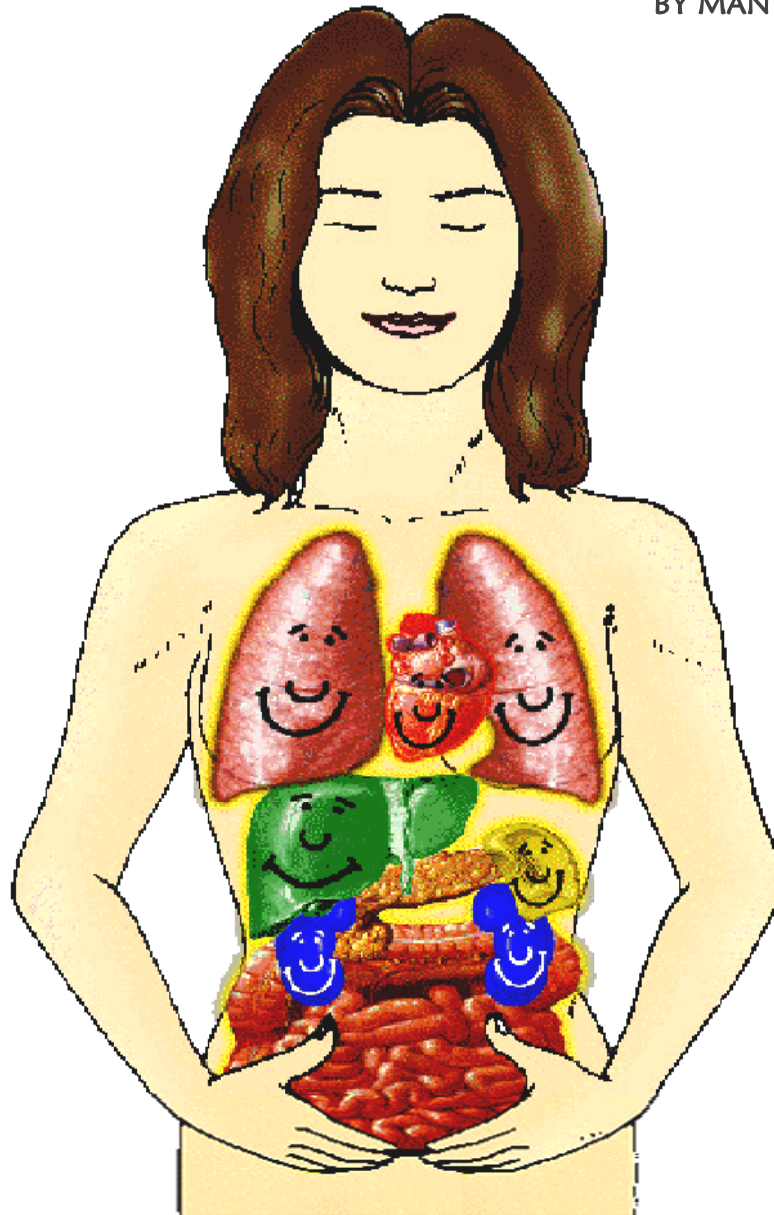
The Inner Smile challenges us to unconditionally accept every aspect of our body, mind and spirit. The Inner Smile connects our biological self, our psychological self, and our spiritual self in an effective way. This meditation cultivates our chi - life force energy, by using subtle breath and envisioning a smile to each part of our internal universe our internal body. When we practice the Inner Smile we experience immediate calmness. Inner Smiling can melt energy patterns that we might feel are stuck or frozen inside us. The Inner Smile is a gentle tool that can dissolve those patterns without struggle. This practice helps to open and release our stuck chi and therefore we reclaim our peaceful, smiling inner body mind space. It also helps to relax physical symptoms of abdominal pain and suffering, and clear negative emotions.



# SIX HEALING SOUNDS AND INNER SMILE

TRANSFORMS NEGATIVE ENERGY INTO POSITIVE HEALING ENERGY

BY MANTAK CHIA



ORGAN	SOUND	COLOUR	MOVEMENT	EMOTION
lung	sssssss	white	palms up overhead fingertips touching	depression sadness to courage righteousness
kidney	chooo	blue	lean forward hands on knees look up	fear nervousness to gentleness calmness
liver	shhhhh	green	interlock fingers overhead lean left look up	anger jealousy frustration to kindness generosity
heart	haaaaw	red	interlock fingers overhead lean right look up	hate cruelty impatience to love joy happiness
spleen	whooo	yellow	palms up fingertips touching hold breath push under ribs	worry anxiety mistrust to fairness openness
triple warmer	heeeeee	balancing	relax lie down rolling pin flattening out the body	balances all energies from the other healing sounds

### EXERCISE 13. Inner Smile Meditation

Begin by closing your eyes and relaxing your whole body. Breathe slowly and smoothly, letting go on the exhalation. Smooth facial muscles and focus attention on the space behind your forehead. Feel inner joy. Visualising a peaceful scene, a smiling baby or your smiling face may evoke this feeling. Gather this bliss behind your eyes and watch it internally as it travels down your body. The smiling energy flows like a sweet stream down your nose to wash over your lips. Raise the corners of your mouth slightly in a sublime inner smile. Simultaneously feel this soften your eyes. Place the tongue on the roof of your mouth, behind the teeth, to connect the energy circuit for the entire practice. Relax your jaw. Swallow saliva and feel your throat open and relax as you smile to your voice box. Thank them for giving you the power of balance and speech.

Visualise your thymus, in the middle of your chest near the heart, like a blossoming flower and smile to it with thanks for strong immunity and healing energy.

Let the smile radiate to the happiness centre of your heart. Feel your heart soften and fill with red love nectar. Release cruelty, harshness, hastiness, impatience and hurt from the heart on the exhalation. Send a smiling love letter to your open heart. Thank it for giving you compassion, kindness, joy and good circulation.

Gather the loving energy from the heart and spread it to your lovely lungs. Sense every cell relax as it releases grief and depression. You can also visualise them as glowing white wings carrying you to your higher mission. Swelling with smiling sap let your spongy lungs soak up joy, love and courage. Thank them for oxygenating your body.

Smile to your liver as it emanates a forest green hue, releasing grey murky light on the exhalation. Release anger and resentment. On the smiling inhalation absorb kindness, forgiveness and acceptance. Thank the liver for its role in assimilation, metabolism and purification.

Send pure smiling streams to your stomach, pancreas and spleen. Visualise these organs basking in a golden yellow light as they relax to release worry and anxiety. Feel faith, fairness and present-minded consciousness saturate this region. Thank the organs for maintaining healthy digestion, immunity and blood sugar levels.

Keeping your body relaxed, send the loving smile to the kidneys. Visualise them like deep blue ears, releasing fear and stress from them. Smile to them as they fill with soothing security, wisdom and calm. Thank them and the adrenals for filtering blood, balancing water and increasing stress resistance. Strong kidneys also give us the willpower to act on our convictions, and they send energy to our reproductive system. Fill it with a tender loving energy, appreciating the pleasure and power it gives you. Thank it for producing hormones that nourish the mind and body.

To finish, smile up your spine, washing the whole body with golden nectar flowing from each vertebra through the nervous system, bone marrow, bones, muscles, skin and hair. The smiling waterfall rises to your crown showering your whole body in smiling ecstasy. Allow the energy to flow back down behind your eyes and pool into your navel. Place your hands directly over the navel. Right hand on top for male, left on top for female. Gather the chi in the navel under your hands. As you breathe in feel yourself feeding energy to the navel. Feel it growing inside you getting bigger and warmer with each breath. Swallow your saliva three times and direct it to your navel. By storing the smiling energy in the navel you will avoid accumulating excess heat in the head or heart. Relax and smile, feeling refreshed and calm.



Like oceans lakes and rivers the flow of energy in the human body rises and falls, like the tide. The ancient Chinese called this energy Chi – energy of life, also known as Qi, Ki or Prana. Imagine a form of liquid energy flowing through the body, moving through long channels called meridians. In the morning the tide of chi within your body is rising, so this is the perfect time to practice exercises such as Chi Kung, Tai Chi and Yoga that open up your meridians and dissolve the stagnant chi. The morning is also a time when the chi in nature is fresh and abundant, a time to drink in the chi from the environment and re-energize yourself for the day ahead.

The practice of Tai Chi uses simple natural exercises that manipulate and improve the flow of chi through your body which can help lead to a more healthy and peaceful life. Tai Chi uses slow meditative martial arts movements to create a natural force field around our mind and body that promotes strength and vitality. With regular practise you can develop a daily practice and holistic lifestyle that creates positive changes in all aspects of life. In this way we can achieve perfect health, develop wisdom and love, and live long and healthy lives in peace and harmony with nature. Tai Chi is designed to absorb the fresh chi of the morning, get your life force moving in the body after a night of sleep, and to prepare your thoughts for a calm and balanced day. It can also be used to prepare your mind and body for other spiritual practices, such as yoga and meditation. Experience the flow of chi for yourself in the following exercises;

#### **EXERCISE 14. Breath of Life**

The easiest way to absorb chi is with the breath. By focusing on your breathing you can raise your energy and help ready yourself for any activity whether physical, mental or spiritual. Begin by sitting comfortably either on the floor with crossed legs or on a chair. Keep your back straight but not rigid or tense. Rest your hands palms up on your knees. Close your eyes and relax your body and mind. Allow your self to breathe normally. Notice the air as it goes in through your nose, travels down to your lungs, and then out again. Pay attention to how your shoulders and chest rise and then lower slightly. Be sensitive to entire process without altering anything. This is the natural flow of chi in and out of your body. Stay with your breathing for several minutes increasing your time as much as you are able.

#### **EXERCISE 15. Awareness of Chi**

The true art of chi involves using your mind, so when you focus your mind on an area of your body, your chi will tend to flow there. Sit in a quiet area with your hands palms up resting on your knees. Relax your body, breathing and mind. Focus all your attention on the palms of your hands. Feel how warm they are and whether they feel heavy or light. Keep your attention focused on your hands. Do you notice any tingling or sensation in the hands? Your chi is now flowing into your hands. Experiment using other parts of your body.

#### **EXERCISE 16. Feeling Chi**

Clap your hands together for 15 seconds. Then close your eyes and feel the sensation in your hands. This is the chi energy that spontaneously goes to your hands because of the clapping. The tingling sensation is created by raising the energy levels in your palms.





THE THREE TREASURES

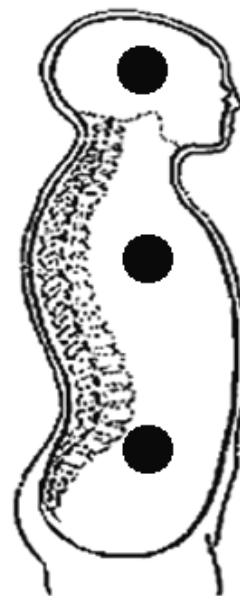
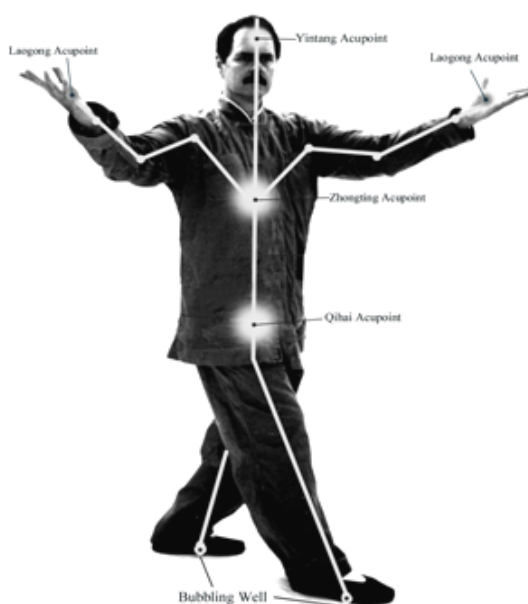
The Three Treasures: Jing, Chi and Shen. They are the origin and root of our life. The philosophy of Tao teaches that the main goals of life are to learn how to retain the Jing, strengthen and smooth the flow of Chi, and enlighten the Shen.

**JING – essence:** It is the original source and most refined part of every living thing, and determines its nature and characteristics. Jing is inherited from our parents and stored in the kidneys near the lower back area. Jing is slowly released into the Lower Dan Tien, the abdomen, to transform the energy that is extracted from food, air and water. Jing must be preserved to ensure a long and healthy life.

**SHEN – spirit:** It is the centre of our mind and being. It has no substance. It is what makes you human, because animals do not have shen. When chi is lead to the head it stays in the upper Dan Tien, the forehead centre, which is the residence of shen. Shen in our body must be nourished by our chi. When our chi is full and strong, our spirit will be enlivened, the mind will be more aware, creative and motivated, and we will be able to concentrate more intensely.

**CHI – energy of life:** It is the internal energy in our body. It is like the electricity that passes through a machine to keep it running. Chi comes from natural energy, food, air, exercise and thinking. Chi is a requirement for life. The chi in our body cannot be seen, but it can be felt. The nature of chi is to follow the mind. Where the mind goes energy follows.





### **UPPER DAN TIEN**

Pineal Gland/Mid-brain region  
Behind the Forehead  
Centre of Consciousness  
Wisdom and Intuition

### **MIDDLE DAN TIEN**

Solar Plexus/Heart region  
Centre of Emotion  
Love and Passion

### **LOWER DAN TIEN**

Lower Abdomen region  
Below the the Navel  
Centre of Gravity  
Centre of Physical Energy

## **DAN TIEN**

The philosophy of Tao teaches that Chi travels through thousands of energy channels in the body known as meridians. These meridians intersect at different points around the body creating high concentrations of chi, or energy centres. The three largest energy centres are known as Dan Tien, which means Elixir of Life. They are widely used in martial arts and acupuncture as an important focus point for meditation, centring, generating and issuing chi. This book focuses on the Lower Dan Tien which refers specifically to the physical centre of gravity located in the lower abdomen. The Lower Dan Tien, fuelled by meditation, is the central furnace of the body and a source of power. With focused attention on this area, energy is gathered and then circulated around the body. In Tai Chi all movement, mind, breath and chi comes from this point and moves from this point.

### **UPPER DAN TIEN – House of the Spirit Realm**

Located in the head (between the eyes and in the center of the brain), this is the place where the intuitive mind can perceive heaven's lighter and more subtle energies, especially if one is emotionally calm and peaceful. An impersonal space where the psychic mind can connect to the higher vibrations of celestial bodies and tap into all knowledge of the universe. Energies can intensify and stagnate in this region if one thinks too much, but can flow more smoothly and properly if focused on spiritual self-cultivation methods such as Taoist Meditation, where one can learn healthier ways to detach from the heavier and potentially more destructive energies of thoughts, emotions and lust.

### **MIDDLE DAN TIEN – House of the Human Realm**

Located in the center of the chest (heart/solar plexus region), but also further extends its energy into both hands. Considered by the ancient Taoist, Tibetan Buddhist and other spiritual traditions, to be the seat of one's soul and root of the ego's sense of self and individuality. Place where the raw earthly powers from below and the detached but sublime heavenly forces from above, mix and combine to create a unique kind of energy in the universe: human emotions and compassion, the heart's energetic capacity to express and receive feelings.

### **LOWER DAN TIEN – House of the Earthly Realm**

Located in the navel area (center of the abdomen), it connects to its source, the earth, via the feet and legs. This zone is primarily responsible for one's physical strength, sexual vitality and over-all health, drawing its power directly from the natural world of trees, mountains, rivers, oceans, sky and food. On a more esoteric level, this area deals with comparatively slower vibrations of energy and denser forms of matter, resulting in manifestations of physical objects and worldly accomplishments on earth.

## THE FOUNDATION OF TAI CHI

We need Chi and Chi pressure in the Dan Tien as a foundation for all Tai Chi practices. The Dan Tien is the energy reservoir in the body; it is the place where we store the energy we generate, gather and absorb in Chi Kung, Tai Chi and meditation. The Dan Tien is also called the ocean of Chi. According to Chinese medical theory, once the ocean is full it overflows into the eight extraordinary meridians. Once these are full the Chi flows into the twelve ordinary meridians, each of which is associated with a particular organ. The Dan Tien is therefore the foundation of the entire energetic system of the body. Chi Kung will help you develop Chi pressure which is one of the best practices to reverse the downward spiraling movements into the upward spiraling movement of the quantity and quality of our life force. In other words, the increase of the Chi pressure in our Dan Tien through Chi Kung will enhance our healing and meditation abilities, and the art of daily living and will also nourish our original force. It is the Chi pressure in the Dan Tien that roots our body and mind. The Lower Dan Tien is full of neurotransmitters that were until recently only known to be found in the brain. The Lower Dan Tien is the key source of intelligence. Chi pressure in the Dan Tien is the foundation for Taoist practices, especially Tai Chi.

### EXERCISE 17. Lower Dan Tien Meditation

Sit comfortably with the back straight. Relax. Place your hands directly over the Lower Dan Tien which is two fingers below the navel. Right hand on top for male, left on top for female. Now imagine a small ball of golden light under your hands in your Lower Dan Tien. It is a source of warmth and healing energy. As you breathe in feel yourself feeding energy to the Lower Dan Tien. Feel it growing inside you get bigger and warmer with each breath. Do this for about for 10 - 20 minutes. The warm feeling comes from your chi.

### EXERCISE 18. Extending the Chi

Allow this energy ball to slowly rise up through the centre of you body to your heart, Middle Dan Tien, the centre of love and kindness. Then feel t rising to your head, Upper Dan Tien, the centre of wisdom and intuition. After a few minutes return your energy ball back to the Lower Dan Tien. You can play with this energy ball outside your body too by extending the hands beyond the Lower Dan Tein and feeling the ball between the palms. One hand above and one below. Feel the chi ball, floating, making your hands move. Feel the chi.

## CHI DIET and NUTRITION

One of the easiest ways to gather the chi is through eating. But the food we eat has an enormous effect on our emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. It should be one of our highest priorities to eat the healthiest food available throughout our life, and our children's. The Chi Diet is an approach to nutrition which developed in China over three thousand of years ago, its overall objective being to live a long and healthy life. The Chi Diet seeks to maintain one's health and energy and to prevent the onset of disease. The nutritional needs of the individual must be taken into account and will vary according to age, constitution, occupation, environment and season. The Chi Diet seeks to provide each individual with the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure his or her diet supplies an adequate supply of chi, to enjoy eating, and to reap the benefits of good food selection. Naturally, some foods and combination of foods are healthier than others. There are also other considerations such as availability of food types, relative costs, ethical and religious considerations, and social customs. Although what we eat is not always a matter of choice the Chi Diet does advise moderation and variety in all things. The Chi Diet deals not only with what the best foods are for an individual at a particular time, but sets out the general principles of how to grow, preserve, mix, prepare, and eat the foods. These principles are built on three underlying concepts; chi theory, yin yang theory, and the five elements theory. Chi Diet seeks to look at food from the perspective of how it influences the energy within the

individual, such as heating/cooling, drying/moistening and its affect on particular organs. This requires consulting a professional medical practitioner, as well as personal experience and wisdom.

### **GUIDELINES FOR CHI DIET**

This improtant topic is often overlooked by students of Tai Chi, and Yoga. Avoid extremes and food fanatics. Always practise moderation and variety. Assess and select foods according to individual requirements that specifically enhance one's personal health, energy and prevention against disease.

Maximize the quantity and quality of chi in the food as it is being grown.

Maximize the quantity and quality of chi in the food at the point of purchase or collection.

Maximize the preservative process of chi in the food between purchase and consumption.

Maximize the quantity and quality of chi in the food during the cooking and preparation process.

Maximize the quantity of chi absorbed through the consumption and digestion process of the food.

### **EXERCISE 19. Personal Chi Diet Analysis**

Maximize your own chi diet using the information above to compare and adjust your current diet.



### **PERSONAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE**

The Greek philosopher Hippocrates said, “Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease.” Despite more medical knowledge, technology and health care facilities than ever before, the health of the Western world is deteriorating at an alarming and ever quickening rate. What most of us fail to realise is that it is what goes into our bodies (that which we absorb from the air, our food and water) that affects the internal environment of our bodies and determines the rate at which we age, and our overall level of health. Toxins absorbed through our external environment (as well as self administered) include:

- ❖ Exhaust and factory emissions.
- ❖ Chlorinated, fluoridated and other pollutants in water.
- ❖ Chemical sprays and fertilisers.
- ❖ Smoking, caffeine, alcohol.
- ❖ Hormone enhanced meat and dairy products.
- ❖ Processed foods, high sugar and high fat junk food.
- ❖ Mental, physical and emotional tension and stress.

Toxins then build up within the body, disrupt the pH level, and cause blood and tissue toxicity. As these toxins accumulate in our cells, they break down and inhibit the body's immune system, and over time damage organs, tissues, arteries, joints and glands. When the body becomes overloaded and unable to keep up the fight, it is then that disease creeps in. Almost all illness and diseases are directly related to the health and condition of our body's internal environment. Toxicity creates a breeding ground for germs and viruses, allowing them to penetrate a weakened immune system. Avoiding and removing toxicity from the body is paramount, if we are to regain and maintain vibrant health, reduce the effects of premature ageing, and ward off illness. In our world today, it is virtually impossible to avoid toxic contamination. However, with environmental awareness and Tai Chi training, combined with minor lifestyle changes, such as food and cleanliness, it is possible to drastically reduce the harmful effects, increase the length and quality of life on this planet, and live free from sickness and disease.

### **POSITIVE THINKING AND DETERMINATION**

There are many obstacles on the path of the peaceful warrior. It is extremely important to have a strong determination to succeed while maintaining a positive mental attitude. Positive thinking promotes mental health and helps to remove negative thoughts, avoiding anxiety and depression through life's ups and downs. However, most people are only positive on the surface, with 90% of their thoughts being negative, for example - fear of failure. Although we appear positive on the outside it is this underlying negativity that we ultimately attract. Buddha said, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." Our thought is our own making and it affects all our succeeding thoughts. It decides the trend of our mind towards integrity or weakness, good or ill. We are the sum total of all our karma; thought, speech and action. Every moment we are changing the aspect of our existence. Every moment we are creating our self. We are responsible for our own future and for the future of mankind. Determination includes awareness of all thoughts, speech and actions, and maintaining a high standard of morality. Be positive. Attract positive energy,

### **SLEEP**

Sleep is a periodic, natural, reversible loss of consciousness. The optimum amount of sleep varies with each individual and age, with children requiring more sleep than adults. The National Sleep Foundation maintains that eight to nine hours of sleep for adults is optimal and that sufficient sleep benefits alertness, memory, problem solving and overall health, as well as reducing the risk of accidents. The University of California, San Diego, found that people who live the longest sleep for six to seven hours each night. The University of Pennsylvania has confirmed that the more one works, the less one sleeps, and that work is the single biggest factor troubling sleep. Many people have trouble sleeping, which may stem from a number of issues, including:

- ❖ Uncomfortable sleep furnishings.
- ❖ Stress from family, job, personal issues.
- ❖ Environmental conditions: heat, cold, pollution, noise, bright light.
- ❖ Environmental surroundings: tidiness of room, odours, cleanliness.
- ❖ Poor body positioning.
- ❖ Improper sleep timing: outside the rhythms of nature.
- ❖ Illness.
- ❖ Pain.
- ❖ Medicine and drugs: some medications may cause insomnia, or result in dependency on a drug to fall asleep; recreational drugs, tea, coffee, and soft drinks containing caffeine, are stimulants that may make sleep difficult or impossible.

The philosophy of Tao recommends early to bed and early to rise. For the average practitioner, this is approximately 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. This is ample time to get a good night's

sleep and gives you enough time in the morning for meditation and yoga. The regular practice of Tai Chi and Chi Kung techniques, such as Tao meditation Solo Forms, greatly enhances the relaxation and rejuvenation of the mind and body, and promotes restful sleep.

### SEX

The philosophy of Tao advises the reduction of sexual activity and thoughts, so that sexual energy can be conserved and used for spiritual progress. This is the true interpretation of 'celibacy' for the average practitioner. Complete sexual suppression is not necessary, but it should be reduced and controlled as much as possible. If you are planning to have children, it is recommended to have sex 2 or 3 times maximum per month, and only during the woman's ovulation period. Taoist and Yogis believe that your children will be much healthier if you avoid sex during pregnancy. In general, reducing sexual activity will save huge amounts of energy and considerably decelerate the ageing process. It will also help in reducing the great attachment that people have with sex and the material world. Advanced students may choose to completely abstain from sexual activity and sexual thoughts.

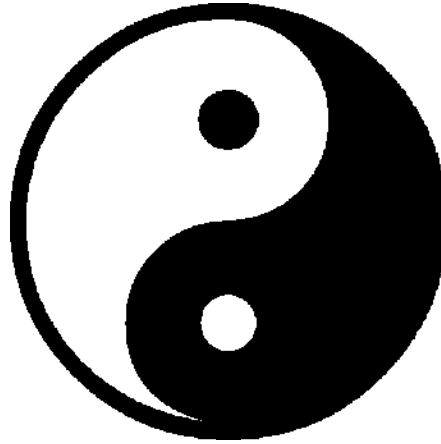
### EXERCISE

Regular exercise is essential for a healthy heart, lungs, digestion, muscles and circulation. Regular exercise relieves tension and stress and induces a good night's sleep. Exercise may include Tai Chi, Chi Kung, Yoga, jogging, swimming, cycling, sports, or walking in nature. For general health purposes the American College of Sports Medicine suggests a minimum of 20 to 60 minutes per day of increased cardiovascular, respiratory and muscular activity, 3 to 5 days per week. Light exercise before Tai Chi can loosen up the back, neck, hips, knees and ankles, and increases the circulation of blood and chi. It is far easier to practise meditation when the body is healthy and can sit quietly, without pain or discomfort, and is fully charged with vitality and strength. In Tai Chi, proper exercise is given by Opening the Gates and the Solo Forms, which work systematically on all parts of the body, revitalising and toning the muscles and ligaments, keeping the spine and joints flexible, improving circulation and the flow of chi. This brings steadiness and lightness to the body and mind. Never exert undue force, as pain is a signal to stop the practice.

**CAUTION:** To avoid injury/illness always consult your medical doctor before commencing any health program. The amount of physical activity you perform should be safely within your physical limitations. Proceed with a suitable and structured low impact program.





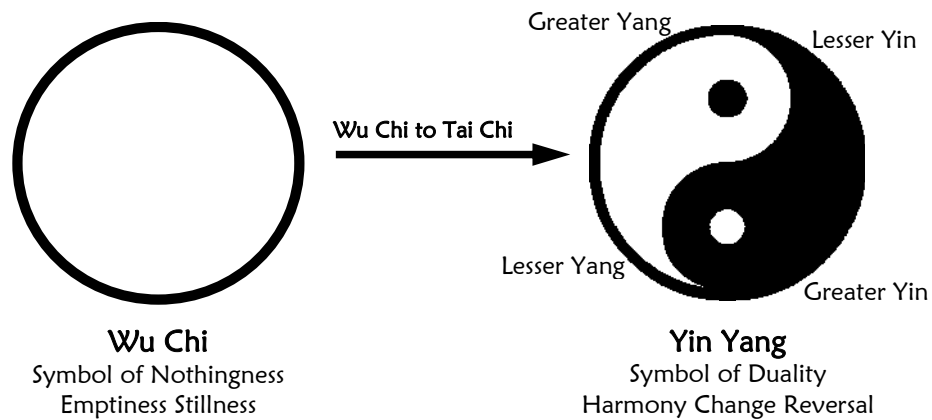


The philosophy of Tao teaches that in the beginning there was nothing. All that existed was the great void, an emptiness so vast that it can not be imagined. The ancient Chinese called this void the Wu Chi, stillness, nothingness. After a time so long that it could not be measured, the Wu Chi gave birth to its exact opposite, the Tai Chi, the everything all in one place, all at the same time with no breaks or changes or movement. But then, the Tai Chi began to move, and slowly divided itself into two equal and opposite halves, Yin and Yang. From this first division into Yin and Yang, or this and that, came the ten thousand things, a Chinese expression that means all the various manifestations of reality to be found in the universe. Yin and Yang represent balance harmony change reversal. They are the root of Chi Kung and Tai Chi and is the source from which it was created and formulated. In order to have a clear concept of what you are trying to accomplish in your practice it is important to understand Yin and Yang theory.

Tai Chi is a Taoist philosophical concept representing the origin of Heaven and Earth and all matter in the world. The character 'Tai' literally means 'Supreme' while here 'Chi' has the literal meaning of 'Ultimate'. Tai Chi transcends the limits of both space and time. The Taoists called it "Tao", meaning 'The Way' or 'The How'. The ancient Chinese believed that the universe is made up of two opposite forces; Yin and Yang, which are constantly trying to balance each other. When these two forces begin to lose their balance, nature finds a way to rebalance them. If the imbalance is significant, disaster will occur. However, when these two forces combine and interact with each other smoothly and harmoniously, they create healing energy that leads to peace, prosperity and happiness.

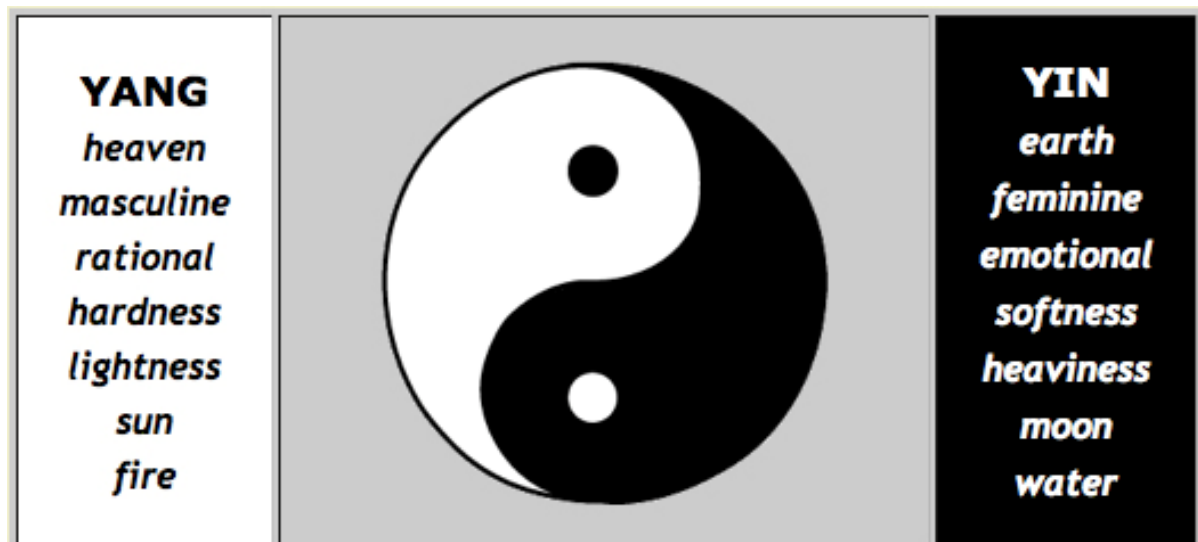
The theory of Five Elements coexisted early with the theory of two forces: yin and yang. These can also simply be called the two forces where chi is the breath, or vital energy of the body, but also simply air, steam, or weather. The implications of the theory are displayed in the great book of divination, the I Ching, the Book of Changes. Yin originally meant shady, secret, dark, mysterious, cold. It thus could mean the shaded, north side of a mountain or the shaded, south bank of a river. Yang originally meant clear, bright, the sun, heat, the opposite of yin and so the lit, south side of a mountain or the lit, north bank of a river. From these basic opposites, a complete system of opposites was elaborated. Yin represents everything about the world that is dark, hidden, passive, receptive, yielding, cool, soft, and feminine. Yang represents everything about the world that is illuminated, evident, active, aggressive, controlling, hot, hard, and masculine. Everything in the world can be identified with either yin or yang. Earth is the ultimate yin object. Heaven is the ultimate yang object.

Although it is correct to see yin as feminine and yang as masculine, everything in the world is really a mixture of the two, which means that female beings may actually be mostly yang and male beings may actually be mostly yin. Because of that, things that we might expect to be female or male because they clearly represent yin or yang, may turn out to be the opposite instead.



### DUALITY AND REVERSAL

Everything that exists manifests a dual or opposite quality, or is in the process of changing from one to the other. Yin and Yang represent this duality that exists throughout life. These opposite facing shapes, that are intertwined and contained within the circle of Wu Chi, represent the duality, harmony, change and reversal of our universe. If there is up, there must be down. If there is left, there must be right. If there is male, there must be female. If there is goodness, there must be evil. If there is inside, there must be outside. If there is darkness, there must be light. If there is love there must be hate. In the centre of each shape is an eye that represents the potential for each half to become its opposite. The concept of Yin Yang Reversal is based on the idea that Yin turns into Yang and Yang turns into Yin. In the ancient classic books of Tao, four stages of Yin Yang are identified: Lesser Yin, Greater Yang, Lesser Yang, Greater Yin.





## TREATISE ON THE SYMBOLISM OF TAI CHI by Chou Tun-i (1017-1073 A.D.)

Through movement the Supreme Ultimate produces yang. When movement reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquillity the Supreme Ultimate produces yin. When tranquillity reaches its limit, movement begins. Movement and tranquillity alternate and are the source of each other. From them are born the distinctions of yin and yang, and the two operations are firmly established.

From the transformations of yang and its union with yin, the Five Elements of Water, fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth manifest. When these five energies of force are orderly and harmoniously distributed, the Four Seasons run their natural course.

The Five Elements represent one system of yin and yang, and yin and yang represent one Supreme Ultimate. The Supreme Ultimate is fundamentally the Ultimate of Nonbeing, and the Five Elements come from these, and each contain their specialised natures.

When the Supreme Ultimate of Nonbeing and the essences of yin-yang and the Five Elements mysteriously unite, integration occurs. Heaven represents the male activity, and Earth represents the female activity. The intercourse of these two natural forces generates and transforms all things. All things produce and reproduce, creating an unending process of transformation.

Man alone acquires the highest excellences of the Five Elements and is therefore the most intelligent of all things. From them his physical form appears, and his spirit develops consciousness. Because of this consciousness the Five Moral Principles arise and he then engages in activity, creating reactions to the external world. From this activity good and evil are distinguished, and human affairs come about.

It is the sage who can discern these affairs through the principles of the Mean, Correctness, Humanity, and Virtuousness – the way of the sage constitutes these four principles. The sage regards tranquillity as fundamental – without desire there will be tranquillity. Through tranquillity the sage establishes himself as the ultimate example of Man. The nature of the sage is identical with Heaven and Earth; his brilliance is identical with the sun and moon; his orderly conduct is identical with the Four Seasons; and his fortunes and misfortunes are identical with those of the spiritual beings. The superior man cultivates these moral attributes and benefits from good fortune, but the inferior man violates them and experiences misfortune.

Therefore, it is said, “Yin and yang are the Way (Tao) of Heaven, the weak and strong the Way of Earth, and humanity and virtue the Way of Man.” It is also said, “Investigating the cyclic changes of phenomena, we will understand the concept of life and death.” Great is the I Ching and its excellence.

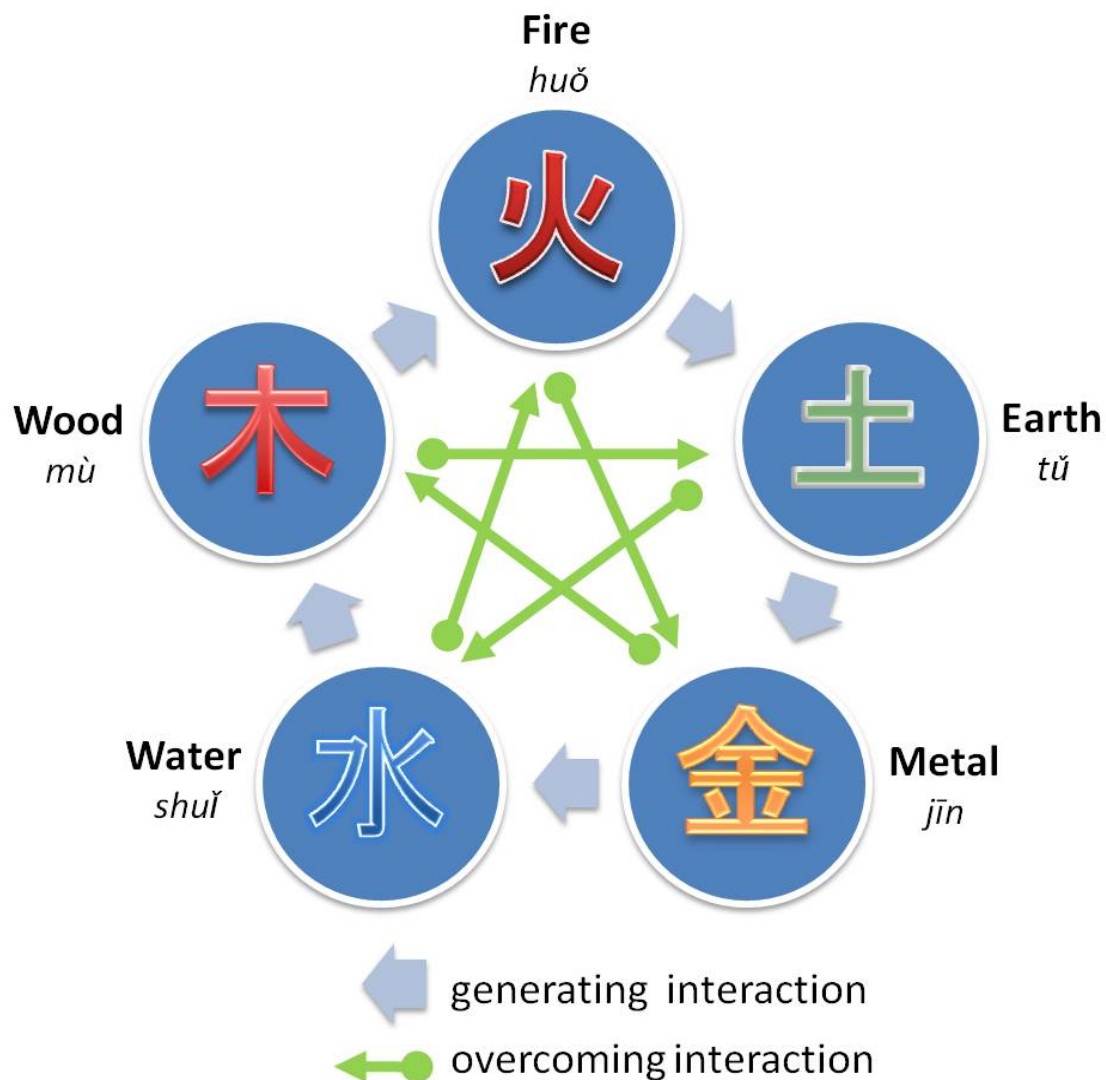


**PA KUA**  
**Before Heaven Arrangement of Fu Xi**

The I Ching teaches that the interaction of Yin and Yang causes the formation of eight entities that affect the growth of plants, the birth of animals and even the evolution of the human race. These entities are known as the Pa Kua, (Bagua) or the Eight Trigrams, and contain the hidden knowledge of internal martial arts. They are the foundation of Tai Chi philosophy and practice. Pa Kua is used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality and changes seen as a range of eight interrelated concepts. Each consists of three lines, each line either broken or unbroken, representing Yin or Yang, respectively. Each Tai Chi form evolved from a specific trigram in the Pa Kua in relation to Wu Xing (The Five Elements). Relating the Pa Kua to the use of Tai Chi Chuan, we can imagine ourselves standing in the center of the circle made by the Trigrams. When our opponent launches an attack from the direction of any one Trigram, we use one of the eight energies (Pa Keng) to divert its force in the direction of another Trigram. Those who have studied Chinese philosophy may care to consider why and how each particular movement is related to the relevant Trigram, or element, but this question is largely irrelevant for our purposes. Suffice it to say that Chang San-feng (14th century) set out the relationship, but we have no record of how he arrived at it. In order to be able to use these Original Thirteen Postures effectively knowledge of the theory is insufficient. Constant practice of the Pushing Hands exercise is essential before we can freely and fluently apply them. Pa Kua must be studied in your daily reading and practice, and integrated into each Tai Chi form. By examining the relationship between the Before Heaven and After Heaven arrangements of the Pakua you can deepen your understanding of the movements of Tai Chi Chuan, the I Ching, and the philosophy of Tao.

**EXERCISE 20. Light and Dark**

Yin and Yang are built into how we see things. You can experience this for yourself with this simple exercise. Look at the brightness in a light bulb for about 1 minute, and then shut your eyes. You will see a dark or negative image that takes on the shape of the light you saw.



### THE FIVE ELEMENTS

According to the philosophy of Tao the relationship of Yin and Yang are intertwined within the universe: Heaven – Yang, and Earth – Yin. In the universe, Yin and Yang can be subdivided into five basic elements: Earth, Metal, Water, Wood and Fire. The Five Elements, known as Wu Xing, are always changing and transforming into each other. Each element is stronger than some elements, but also helps other elements: water can put out a fire, fire consumes wood, dams can be built with earth to prevent flooding, fire softens metal, a metal axe can chop down a tree, etc. But water also helps trees to grow, wood burns to ashes which go into the earth. Tai Chi uses Yin and Yang, and the Five Elements to understand the human body, since we too are part of the universe and are made of earth, wood, metal, fire and water. In this way the relationship between all the various organs and systems in the human body can be diagnosed and treated to maintain perfect health and vitality, in harmony with the Five Elements. This is the foundation of Tao philosophy and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

### EXERCISE 21. Red and Green

You will also perceive the opposite when you look at a colour. Tape a red square of paper to a white wall. Look at it for about 2 minutes and then shut your eyes. The image of a green square will appear. This is because red is visually in balance with green. Our eyes have their own Yin Yang balance that always interact to help us see our world.

## **EXERCISE 22. Opening Yourself to Both Sides**

Yin Yang can be applied to daily life. Sit quietly for a few moments. Think of a difficult situation you have experienced recently. Now imagine it as the opposite. For example, imagine that a difficulty is not a difficulty, that it is an advantage. What thoughts do you have about it now, when you think of it as the opposite? Now think of a one-sided situation, perhaps something that you have always done a certain way. Imagine the opposite and genuinely experience the change. Think about Yin and Yang and how things always flow from one to the other. This may stretch your imagination, especially if you are set on one way.

## **EXERCISE 23. Self-acceptance**

Think about your own qualities. Do you have some behaviour that you do not like about yourself and are trying to stop? Consider it, instead, from the broader perspective of Yin and Yang. What is the polar opposite of this trait? Try to find the positive in this opposite. What are your positive intentions before you become negative? Find a more constructive perspective, one that allows both sides to be. This adjustment moves you closer to living in harmony and balance with the cycles of nature, with Tao.

## **BREATH, MOVEMENT, WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION**

In the practice of Tai Chi we identify Yin Yang reversal in terms of breath, movement and weight distribution. Notice how the fullness of breath transforms into emptiness. As one foot is lifted it becomes light and empty - Yin, at the same time the other foot on the ground becomes heavy and full - Yang. In combat, Tai Chi takes full advantage of the opponent's direction of change from Yin to Yang and Yang to Yin. The opponent's state of emptiness or fullness reveals his excesses and deficiencies, and where he is most vulnerable.



30% full - Greater YIN

70% full - Greater YANG

## **AVOID DOUBLE WEIGHTED**

Double weighted in the body refers to even weight distribution in the feet and legs. The equal distribution of body weight creates a situation where both sides of the body are neither more full nor more empty. This is to say that the weight of the body is equal on both sides. We should avoid being double weighted because moving from full to empty requires less time and energy than shifting equal weight distribution. When moving from full to empty we can prevent being double weighted by applying the graceful physics of fluid motion. As a lake draws from a stream, we shift the balance of weight simultaneously from our feet, legs and waist. The vacuum of emptiness draws from the fountain of fullness. The result is effortless motion.





**TREATISE ON THE PA KUA**  
**The Eighth Wing of the I Ching**  
**by Confusius ( 551-479 B.C.)**

I.

In ancient times, when the sages were compiling the I Ching, they sought mysterious assistance for their spiritual wisdom, and so created the regulations for using the divining plant. The number three was assigned to Heaven, and the number two to Earth, and from these the calculation of all the other numbers came. The sages contemplated the changes in the divided (yin) and undivided (yang) lines by using Yarrow stalks, and formed the Pa Kua. From the movements that occur between the strong (yang) and the weak (yin) lines, they were then able to assemble their teachings on each of the separate lines. There was then produced a harmonious conformity with that of the Way (Tao) and Virtue (Te), to aid in the decision of what was right for each image. They made exhaustive discriminations of these rightnesses, with the effect that the nature of each of them was completely developed, and arrived at the decree of Heaven's appointment.

II.

Formerly, when the ancients compiled the I Ching, it was designed so that the images would be in conformity with both the principles of the basic natures of humankind and all things, and with the regulations appointed for them by Heaven. In doing this, they revealed the Way of Heaven by calling the lines yin and yang, the Way of Earth by calling the lines weak and strong, and the Way of Man by calling the lines benevolence and righteousness. Each Trigram then embraces the Three Powers. With the images stacked upon each other, there were then six lines in the full image (Hexagram). The Three Powers were aligned with their yin and yang lines, occupying their proper position within the Hexagrams so that each of the images was completed.

III.

The images of Heaven and Earth received their fixed positions. Mountains and Valleys were to interchange their influences on each other. Thunder and Wind were to create excitement to each other. Water and Fire were to do each other no injury. In this way there was mutual communication between all the Eight Images. Calculating the past is natural logic and acquiring knowledge of the future is forecasting. Therefore, in the I Ching there is both natural logic and forecasting.



Relaxation is one of the major keys to success in Tai Chi. Only when you are fully relaxed will all the energy channels be open, allowing the chi to flow freely throughout your whole being. Relaxation includes three major parts; the mind, the breathing, and the physical body. Relaxation practice can be done at anytime and anywhere. It can also be done in any posture. Wu Wei represents the concept that energy or chi flows in the path of least resistance. This concept is also known as the water course way. It embodies one of the greatest concepts of Tai Chi: having a calm mind and a relaxed body. If the muscles are tense then the meridians that chi flows through will be restricted. If the muscles are relaxed the meridians naturally dilate and the chi flows freely through the whole body.

The first key to relaxation is your mind, and the second key is your breathing. Remember, when you relax you must first relax your mind. Only when your mind is relaxed will your body start to relax and your lungs loosen. When your lungs are loose you will be able to regulate your breathing and slow down your heartbeat. When this happens your mind will reach a deeper level of calmness and peace. This deeper mind will relax your lungs again slowing down your heartbeat even further. This process will lead you to a deeply calm state which allows you to feel and sense every cell of your body and every function of the internal organs. Only then can you say that you have relaxed your body completely.

### RELAXING THE MIND

Relaxing the mind can be reached in the rhythm of long walks, watching a river flow, gazing at clouds, and even in the relaxed and tranquil rhythm of familiar physical chores. The following Tao meditation techniques are designed to train the mind through letting go of all external influences and thoughts. This process can help you to release mental tension and stress, and relax into the natural experience of peace and harmony. Daily Tao meditation is fundamental for success in Tai Chi.

#### EXERCISE 24. Stillness Meditation

Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine and head straight, but not tense. Rest the hands on the knees palms up. Gently rest the tongue on the roof of the mouth. Relax the body. Relax the breathing. Relax the mind. Keep absolutely still, relaxed and alert. Imagine there is a small bowl balancing on the top of your head. In the bowl is water. Keep the water completely still and without ripples so that the surface is like a mirror. The slightest movement of the body will create ripples and disturb the surface of the water, so keep the body absolutely still. The tiniest thought will create ripples and disturb the surface of the water, so keep the mind completely focused on maintaining the stillness of the water. The awareness should be so completely centred on the water that the awareness of the body and the external environment is lost. At first the mind may be very busy, and you might even feel that the meditation is making the mind busier; but in reality you are becoming aware of how busy the mind actually is. If you discover that the mind has wandered and is following other thoughts gently bring your concentration back to the water. Keep the water completely still by not moving or thinking. Be patient. Keep absolutely still, relaxed and alert. Stay with the stillness of the water for 10 minutes or longer. Feel calm and refreshed.

#### EXERCISE 25. Tranquillity Meditation

Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine straight. Keep absolutely still and relaxed. Imagine that you are sitting on the bank of a calm, clear lake. Imagine that the surface of the lake is like a mirror. Completely smooth, completely still. Feel the stillness

inside your body, mind and spirit. Feel your whole being becoming quiet, calm and refreshed. As a cloud drifts past, see its reflection in the lake. As the cloud passes imagine the lake becoming clear again. Keep watching the reflecting clouds that pass, but always return to the clear lake. After a time, the clouds clear and the lake reflects the vast blue sky. Completely smooth, completely still. Feel the stillness inside your body, mind and spirit. Feel your whole being deeply relaxed and refreshed. Stay with the stillness of the clear lake for 10 minutes or longer.

### **RELAXING THE BREATH**

Your breathing is closely related to your thoughts, and especially to emotional feelings. Once the mind is calm, breathing can be independent of thought and emotions. The first step toward relaxing your breathing involves neutralizing the effects that your emotions have on the breathing process. This involves learning to relax the muscles in the chest which relate to your breathing. Let the chi flow through the breath, let your spirit breathe in unity with all creation.

#### **EXERCISE 26. Relaxing the Chest**

Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine and head straight, but not tense. Gently rest the tongue on the roof of the mouth. Try to relax as much as possible. Keep absolutely still, relaxed and alert. Bring your calm and concentrated mind to the area of your chest. Gently take in the air and slowly push it out without holding your breath. Do not force the breathing. As you breathe out try to relax the chest. While you are doing this pay attention to how the muscles of the diaphragm move. The more you can feel them the more your mind is able to lead the relaxation to a deeper level. Continue breathing for about 10 minutes, feeling the chest becoming looser and more relaxed with each out breath.

#### **EXERCISE 27. Mindful Breathing**

Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine straight. Relax as much as possible. Relax the breathing, allowing the body to breathe naturally on its own. Become aware of the nose. Observe the sensation of breath as it comes in and out. Do not try to control the breath, just observe it. Be the witness of your breath, but without judgment. Let each breath remind you to stay centred and present in the now. Be in the present moment with the breath. Breath to breath, moment to moment. The awareness should be so completely centred on the breath that the awareness of the body and the external environment is lost. If you catch the mind drifting away, gently bring it back.

### **RELAXING THE BODY**

For deep relaxation to occur during Tai Chi we must first take a comfortable and relaxed stance, and avoid any unnecessary strain in posture or movement. Second, we begin to relax the muscles and tendons. This can only be achieved when the mind is peaceful and calm enough to feel deep into the muscles and tendons, and gauge the level of relaxation, feel the flow of chi, and sink the chi into the Dan Tien. The final stage is the relaxation which reaches the internal organs, bone marrow and every pore in your skin. The mind must be at a very deep level of relaxation and sensitivity for this to occur. Only if you relax deep into your body will you be able to lead the chi there. Relaxation in the standing position will be discussed later. Below is a simple lying down relaxation technique.

#### **EXERCISE 28. Tense and Release**

Lie down on your back and relax making sure the spine and head are straight. Close your eyes and allow the body, mind and spirit to become quiet, calm and refreshed. Now take a slow deep breath and hold it in. Take your awareness to the right leg. Lift it 5cm from the

ground. Powerfully tense the whole leg from the thigh down to the foot. Tense the whole leg for 2 seconds. As you breathe out drop the leg by completely releasing it, allowing it to fall to the ground loose and relaxed. As you exhale feel the tingle of blood and chi filling the areas that were tense. Feel your right leg sink into the floor loose and relaxed.

Take another slow deep breath and hold it in. Take your awareness to the left leg. Lift it 5cm from the ground. Powerfully tense the whole leg from the thigh down to the foot. Tense the whole leg for 2 seconds. As you breathe out drop the leg by completely releasing it, allowing it to fall to the ground loose and relaxed. As you exhale feel the tingle of blood and chi filling the areas that were tense. Feel your left leg sink into the floor loose and relaxed.

Take another slow deep breath and hold it in. Take your awareness to the right hand. Make a fist with the right hand. Lift the arm and hand 5cm from the ground. Powerfully tense the arm from the shoulder down to the fist. Tense the whole arm for 2 seconds. As you breathe out drop the arm by completely releasing it, allowing it to fall to the ground loose and relaxed. As you exhale feel the tingle of blood and chi filling the areas that were tense. Feel your right arm sink into the floor loose and relaxed.

Take another a slow deep breath and hold it in. Take your awareness to the left hand. Make a fist with the left hand. Lift the arm and hand 5cm from the ground. Powerfully tense the arm from the shoulder down to the fist. Tense the whole arm for 2 seconds. As you breathe out drop the arm by completely releasing it, allowing it to fall to the ground loose and relaxed. As you exhale feel the tingle of blood and chi filling the areas that were tense. Feel your left arm sink into the floor loose and relaxed. Now completely relax your whole body. Feel a deep sense of relaxation coming over your whole being. Hold this relaxed awareness for 10 minutes or longer.

#### **RELAXATION BY A.T.DALE**

From the first moment you begin class you hear those frustrating words: Relax! Did you know that many languages don't have the word relax? Instead of saying relax, it's usually something like: let go, release, loosen, soften up. Most of my teachers have talked about relaxation as a natural state, a state when we return to calmness, health, and the unity of mind and body. As I think about it more and more I don't think relaxation is natural at all. And, there are many types or degrees of relaxation from completely loose to an athlete's alertness.

I consider relaxation of mind and body as a spiritual state. Only when the mind is calm can the body truly relax. And, if the body isn't at ease the mind can't relax. When I'm talking about spirit or spiritual I am referring to a state where we are calm, centered, clear, and at peace with ourselves. Now that's true relaxation. There are few people I'd describe as being close to that state. Those individuals usually have a casual and happy-go-lucky air about them. Almost an 'I don't care,' attitude. What goes on around them doesn't touch or move their center.

In order to relax we have to basically just 'let go.' Let go of our posturing, or our need to control, manipulate, or force our views, beliefs, or opinions. No needless reaction to words or actions. What comes to mind is the Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror. I try my best not to tell students to relax since the opposite usually happens. Or, they become frustrated. Instead I prefer asking them to be comfortable. Once you're comfortable you're able to relax. If you're not comfortable then there's no way you can relax. All new members of Xin Qi Shen Dojo get the following homework (for the rest of their lives): at

every red light, every line you have to stand in and wait, TV commercials, stuck in traffic: take a moment to see if you are physically comfortable. If not, then adjust your stance, loosen up, try to figure out why you are uncomfortable and let go. Then proceed about your task.

It's daily decrease, not daily increase. Learning to be comfortable within our bodies, with circumstances, and events. This, of course, is a continual process. What we each need to ask ourselves is what's important? Being healthy and happy or in continual tension and conflict? Moving from, and as center instead of being blown in all directions by the winds of events, words, and life's situations. Another saying comes to mind from the Zen tradition:

A warrior has no opinions, a warrior is simply aware.

As we practice our forms are we practicing for showing off, exercise, or to develop a following? Shouldn't we be practicing to strip away layers of tensions and desire? Skill will come. As we practice *tuishou*, *roushou*, or any partner work, are we doing it to show what we know, to control or injure our partners, or to learn from the situation? How to surf, stay centered and safe? We should be studying ourselves in this particular situation.

Class and practice. This is one easy area to polish ourselves. Too often I see students practicing with the assumption that they're learning specific movements to deal with real attacks. The real lessons are in body movement, balance, centering, learning about ourselves, where we're tense, where we're controlling, where we fight and clash, where we aren't centered or over our feet. Class and partner practice is teamwork to learn and polish the principles not merely throwing someone down, or demonstrating who is better or showing off or comparing our practice against others.

Question: When you learned to drive what did you practice? I practiced the techniques of driving and awareness of events during the time I was driving. Have you ever had to veer out of the way of a cat, squirrel, biker? Have you ever had to slam on the brakes to avoid running into or over something? When you drive are you constantly looking for that squirrel or event to happen?

Due to your driving practice, which involved technique and awareness training, I bet you were able to swerve out of the way or brake before hitting the cat. (I sincerely hope so). However, you didn't practice that, you practiced technique and awareness drills. Techniques in a dojo, no matter how free form, will never be the same as in real life. We can't simulate a real-time situation within the dojo. On a small level we may be able to simulate the attack but never the intent, anger, desperation, momentum or desire to really hurt each other. Dojo practice is training on various levels. If a car comes out of the blue and is about to hit you, you'll jump out of the way, or you'll duck a strike and see an opportunity to counter or escape.

I see dojo practice, whether it is form work or partner work, as practicing to relax within various situations. Actually it's a study of ourselves to see where we aren't relaxed and then figure out why not and fix it. This is that stripping away bad habits and attitudes, letting go.

People care too much! It's good to want to be correct and strive for improvement but I see too much effort creating blockages. The minute a student doesn't give a *sh\*\** about who is watching or how perfect their form is, it's usually the most correct I've seen them practice. So loosen up and just re . . . Let go.

## HANDLING STRESS WITH TAI CHI

### BY MILTON HUANG, M.D.

The world seems to get more hectic and complex every day. We are being bombarded by a multitude of different ideas, different cultures and different conflicts. New technologies change our jobs and our relationships with instant messages, instant demands and instant expectations. Everything seems to keep accelerating, moving increasingly faster. These are the feelings that bring people to my door and keep me busy in my job as a psychiatrist. Everyone is stressed, even in "laid-back" Santa Cruz. Part of my job is to help people find relief from that stress. Although some relief can be found through herbs, medications or other substances, I find that more lasting relief comes when people recognize patterns in themselves that contribute to their stress, then engage in a sustained effort to redirect those internal forces. This is not easy, and is sometimes even stressful in itself, but it is a lot healthier and allows greater flexibility in the long run.

Stress is not a one-way street that the outside world uses to make deliveries to our door. It is a dynamic response to the conditions of our lives. When we feel stressed, we often make it worse by worrying about it, blaming ourselves for not being "good enough," or simply tensing up and carrying the tension around in a defensive stance. I have learned this not only through talking to my patients, but also through my own experience. Stress, and specifically anxiety, is a visceral body reaction. Few other emotions remind us so directly that mind and body are inseparably connected. We feel our anxiety in our clenched guts and thumping hearts. We get physical aches and pains. Our hands get cold or sweaty. Yet, this connection between mind and body is generally automatic and unconscious. When we are able to look at ourselves and perceive how these body reactions are tied to our feelings about our lives, one is struck by the fact that mind and body are not only connected, but connected in a way we often cannot control. Anxiety reactions can seem to come out of nowhere or appear completely disproportionate to any rational assessment of the danger of a particular situation. Learning how to manage these reactions is difficult and sometimes counterintuitive. I find it a constant personal challenge, as well as a professional one.

Although I have been trained in multiple therapeutic techniques and theories, I constantly look for ideas and approaches to better manage and resolve anxiety. In the last year-and-a-half, I have explored one such approach in t'ai chi ch'uan, or tai chi. This ancient discipline can teach a broad range of self-awareness and self-connection skills that help a person understand and manage many physical and emotional issues.

Those with a passing acquaintance immediately visualize a group of people moving in slow motion in a park in the early morning hours. My earlier impressions were primarily derived from such images, as well as various readings in Chinese philosophy. Yet, tai chi is not simply beautiful, slow movement. It is a highly refined and sophisticated martial art and self-development discipline. My current understanding comes from regular training with a local teacher, Greg Brodsky. A martial artist since 1960, Brodsky studied with two of the most renowned tai chi masters in the United States, Cheng Man-Ching and William C.C. Chen. Now in his 60s, Brodsky's emphasis is on practical body mechanics with exquisite awareness and practical cultivation of energy through the body. He always employs a characteristic gentle and humorous style, emphasizing the mental and emotional aspects in every lesson.

One of these basic lessons is called "rooting." In this part of tai chi, one seeks to develop a solid grounding of self to the earth, keeping your feet on the ground, your feelings open and your mind clear and focused. Attention moves through the body from earth to foot to legs to center to hands. You begin to be aware of the constant relationship of how you physically support yourself, how different parts of your body are interconnected and how



your efforts and intentions can hinder or enhance that support and connection. You also become more aware of the natural flow of motion and energy through the body and how these flow through our connection to the world around us. The physical background for such lessons is practice of the form - a series of 60 movements that takes 10 to 15 minutes. As I move through these steps, I maintain awareness from moment to moment of where I am and how I am moving. Such attention has shown me how unconscious tensions are always present in different places in my body. Although being aware of how tense I am often makes me even more tense (since I know that I "need to relax"), the process of being immersed in the flow of tai chi helps reduce the tendency to make those judgments and self-criticisms. Brodsky and his wife and co-teacher, Ching, work to create a training space where there are no "good" or "bad" moves, encouraging their students to just recognize their self-generated stress patterns and cultivate new ones. These efforts have taught me that the main barriers to a comfortable inner state and competent tai chi practice are emotional. It is through learning your own emotional "root" and center that you can begin to recognize your own strengths and boundaries and feel a greater comfort in letting go and relaxing. This in turn allows us to release the energy we waste in defensive stances and to better connect with everything around us. This process creates an energized and dynamic relaxation that is not passive, but rather alive with a power that comes from our connection to the energy all around us. Although I am only a novice in learning these skills, I can understand what Greg means when he quotes his first teacher, Cheng Man-Ching: "Stillness while in motion is true stillness."



These lessons become even more clear in another part of tai chi that is not as widely known: Push Hands. Push Hands practice extends the body awareness and connection developed in solo practice to a situation in which one interacts with another person. In this exercise, two people face each other and, within safe boundaries, attempt to push each other off balance. As in form practice, one strives to maintain a constant grounding and balance, as well as a smooth and natural flow - this time in coordination between two different individuals. To be successful, one must pay close attention to their partner's actions and intentions. You quickly learn that single-minded pursuit of the idea of pushing with aggressive force makes you vulnerable because your force can be used against you. It is from knowing and blending with your partner's moves that you can learn how to recognize and redirect them in a natural and flowing way. Tai chi practitioners call this "listening." I find that, with Push Hands as with the tai chi form, anxious emotions create the greatest

barrier to progress. I have become acutely aware of how I tense or overreact when I sense a push coming, thereby wasting energy or making myself more vulnerable. I also see how I inhibit my own pushes and reflexively become passive, failing to push when I should. These are the same emotional reflexes that I always carry with me, whether I'm playing with my kids or working with a patient. In the exercise of Push Hands, I have a dynamic arena where I can learn to recognize and change unconscious patterns of behavior - an essential part of growing to be a better father and therapist.

Personally, I have found my work in tai chi to be challenging, yet an important path that continues to provide me opportunities to grow emotionally. The emotional self is always difficult to change, as it resists with a legion of deceptive devices. Obvious symptoms such as stress activate us and draw us into looking for immediate relief, sometimes leading us to miss the larger patterns of how we become trapped in our lives. I always encourage people to look to the larger picture and not rely on the quick fixes that are becoming all too easily available in modern society. The healthiest ways to reduce stress are the ones that last. Stress is often a sign that we are challenged by the task of uniting our physical, intellectual and emotional selves. It is from discontinuities between these selves that we often create our personal lifelong traps that can repeatedly drain us. Recognizing these traps and resolving these discontinuities form an ongoing, lifetime work that is essential for health and for living fully. Each person is unique, with unique background, unique talents and a unique path to tread. Some find assistance in such a task through spiritual practice. Others through psychotherapy or disciplines like tai chi. If you seek new ways to find how to connect to your mind and body, you should consider finding a teacher or "sifu" and discover what this ancient practice can do for you.

The primary reason to study these arts is to improve our daily life. Our practice and study of these arts is only a starting point. Our goal is to take these principles into our daily life to improve the quality of our life, nurture excellence, and help create a positive future. The teaching here is principle based, not form stylized. I see Qi Gong, Taiji, Bagua, and Xing Yi as elements of the internal arts. Though each art has a complete curriculum, each is only one aspect when referring to the internal arts. As a student of several forms of Bagua and Taiji, I see each as one view of the art. My goal is to understand the art, not the various views. We do not support or promote the sport, fighting, or performance oriented versions of the internal martial arts.

FORMS FOLLOW FUNCTION  
A.T.Dale





In Tai Chi we move from our centre. In the human body the centre of gravity is at the Lower Dan Tien and is located in the lower abdomen just below the navel. Success in practising Tai Chi depends on focusing your full awareness of body, breath and mind, and revolving them around your centre of balance at the Dan Tien, and moving from the waist.

### CENTERING

Finding your centre is known as centering. It is the process of becoming grounded and stable like a mountain or a pyramid. When you are centred and relaxed you may begin the rooting and sinking, sending your roots deep into the earth. This is the process of directing awareness to the Dan Tien and down through the legs, to the feet and into the ground and is essential to the stability of all movement. This is achieved through relaxation which allows gravity to draw internal physical weight and tension down to the lowest parts of the body. Before we begin rooting and sinking, let's practise a few centring techniques.

#### EXERCISE 29. Abdominal Breathing

Centering can be achieved through this abdominal breathing technique, which directs all your awareness to the Lower Dan Tien and assists in focusing all movement from the centre of gravity. Stand in Horse Riding Stance. Breathe in slowly and deeply through the nose. Direct the air gently into your lower abdomen, filling it like a big balloon. Hold for 2 seconds. Slowly and gently breathe out through the mouth, cooling the mind and body, releasing all tension and stress. Feel your entire being relaxed and centred in the Lower Dan Tien. You may feel a ball of energy at your centre getting warm as you concentrate all your chi to your centre. Continue to breathe into the Lower Dan Tien for 10 minutes. Then relax your breathing. You should feel warm, calm and centred.

#### EXERCISE 30. Waterfall Meditation

This technique helps you to become centred and grounded and washes away many negative thoughts and distractions. Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine straight. Relax as much as possible. Concentrate on your Lower Dan Tien for a few minutes. Guide the chi from the Lower Dan Tien to the front of your stomach. As you inhale guide the chi down around the outside of your body, past your perineum and up your spine to the top of your head and down the forehead to the eye brow centre, Upper Dan Tien. Now exhale and allow the chi to flow down the front of your face and body. Imagine a gentle waterfall of loving energy descending down the front of your body, releasing tension and stress. Feel your eyes becoming kind as you relax your face. Smile. Feel all your negativity descending down the waterfall through the front of your body and into the ground. Feel all your negativity being grounded deep into the earth with the ants and stones and soil and pebbles. Feel refreshed and calm. Go back to your centre and slowly repeat this cycle 9 times.

### ROOTING AND SINKING

Rooting and sinking is everything. It is both a base and a foundation. It is one of the most important things in life. A good building must have a strong and firm base. A successful company needs a good foundation. A healthy plant requires a healthy root. The excellent flow of Tai Chi movements must have a steady, firm root. Without a strong root, the whole body will not be able to relax. Relaxation is the ultimate goal for all Tai Chi students. Soft, slow, gentle flowing movements require a strong and firm base in the foot. Once the foot is firm, the other parts of the body can move freely and stay relaxed. The

foot's root itself should not be too relaxed or loose. Rooting and sinking occurs when you consciously relax the entire body, while maintaining an erect posture. This ensures that the bulk of the weight in the body is supported by the thighs, thereby allowing the pelvis and sacrum to swivel and shift freely in all directions to maintain constant directional equilibrium. When the soles of the feet are strongly secured on the ground, the mind and body will be relaxed. In turn, a relaxed body with a peaceful mind will loosen the joints, softening the muscles, and will open all the vessels and meridians. That allows the inner energy to flow easily, and to move the upper body freely, without interrupting the root. The root will continue to stay firm and sturdy. This will achieve the soft, slow and beautiful fluid movements of Tai Chi.

The foot is the light switch. The hand is the bulb.

Grandmaster William C. C. Chen

### **MECHANICS OF THE THREE NAILS BY GREG BRODSKY**

Your physical and energetic root, which is in your foot, provides the basis for everything in this beautiful art of Tai Chi. By developing a steady, firm root you can begin opening the doors to its secrets. Relaxation is the first priority for all Tai Chi Chuan players. To relax into the flowing movements of the form, and to apply the moves powerfully when you need them, you need a strong base in your foot. Once the foot provides a firm, reliable base, the other parts of the body can relax and move freely and effectively. The foot itself should not be too relaxed or loose, but should give you a feeling of firm compression into the surface on which you are standing. To root your foot, three points on the medial or inner aspect of the sole are especially useful. The first is the big toe. The other two points are on the heel and the inner part of the ball of the foot. Grandmaster Chen calls these "the three active nails" because when the foot is rooted, these three points anchor your steps like nails that penetrate the ground. The nails remain passive while you move your leg and sink your foot into place; they become active when you energize your movements.

The three nails cannot activate without the Lower Dan Tien compression. Once the foot is firmly rooted on the ground, you can activate the nails by generating a very gentle compression of breath into your Lower Dan Tien and by envisioning where you want your hands to go. Send your thought to the nails and compress downward by gently inhaling into the Lower Dan Tien. The activated nails then send signals back up through the body to move your fingers, hands, or the other foot, wherever you are envisioning applied action. As you release this compression at the end of the action, exhale. Note that this breathing process is specific for practicing the form. When you are moving fast, or dealing with significant forces, the breathing process changes.

The three nails align with the weight-bearing centerline of your body, which is the line of least resistance, greatest economy of movement, and greatest power. When you initiate a movement, this line, which I call the "body vector," passes energy from the nails through the knee to the hip joint, through your center of mass (Lower Dan Tien) up your spine to end at your hands. When you are kicking, the active vector ends at the kicking foot. By focusing on the vector and keeping everything else "quiet," you can move slowly in the same way that you would if you were moving quickly while remaining very relaxed. When you need to move quickly, you have a clean line of movement trained into your body and mind and can generate power along that line.

The 1st nail is like a rudder of a ship, the 2nd like the engine, the 3rd like the anchor. The 3rd nail 'keeps the frame' (sets the boundaries) of each move.

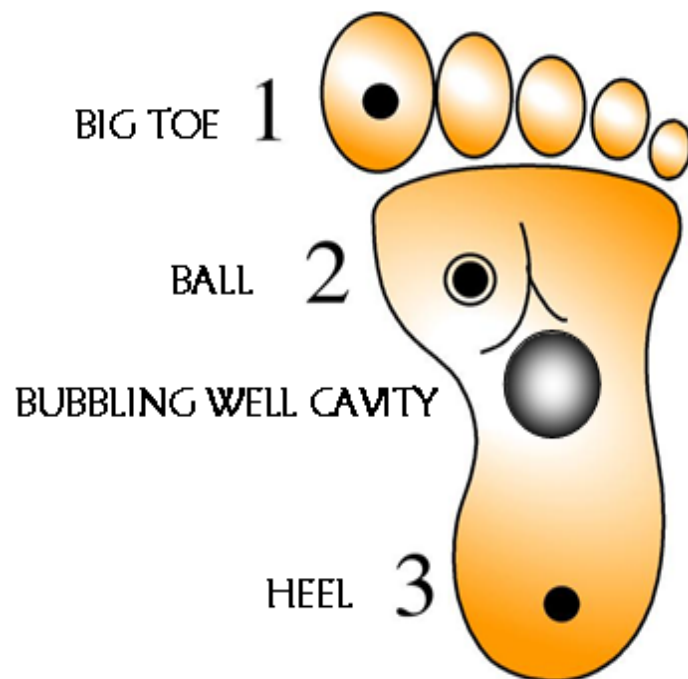
Grandmaster William C. C. Chen

At all times, a more passive branch of the vector extends to the top of your head. You can enliven this branch by imagining that your head is suspended from above. This keeps you from hanging your head and enables your spirit to rise unobstructed. Branches of the vector also extend throughout your body, causing you to feel open and relaxed throughout, never cramped or constricted. You can enliven these branches by thinking that your dan-t'ien is the center of a wheel while your extremities are the spokes.

### DEVELOP YOUR ROOT BY GREG BRODSKY

The three nails anchor the primary vector, enhancing your ability to root in movement. When you send your thought to the nails—specifically the second nail—your energy bounces back up through your relaxed body to your hands. One might call this "playing the foot." To develop truly satisfying T'ai Chi, I strongly recommend that you learn to play the foot. This focus on the nails is distinct from the idea of initiating movement from the waist, as described in most English-language texts on T'ai Chi. My understanding is that the word "waist" is a common mistranslation of the term, *yau-k'ua*, a compound word that Cheng Man-Ch'ing used in the early 1960s to describe the hip-joint and waist combined. The *yau-k'ua* determines the power and quality of your T'ai Chi, but your movements don't begin there. They begin in the foot, are directed by the *yau-k'ua*, and are expressed in the hands. Your Chi must flow through your body, penetrate your bones and spine, and collect in your belly (Lower Dan Tien) but everything begins in your root. As you play the foot, relax, and quiet your mind, your energy will naturally flow and accumulate in your Dan Tien.

Further, while all T'ai Chi literature acknowledges the significance of the root, conventional wisdom states that one should root in the Bubbling Well Cavity, which lies at the point just lateral and to the back of the ball of the foot. The Bubbling Well Cavity is the beginning of the kidney meridian in Chinese medicine. It is important for health and energy circulation, but not as useful as the root of dynamic physical action as are the three nails. Energy coming from the Bubbling Well Cavity, for example, is not capable of producing the movements of Tai Chi Chuan or other physical activities. You want this point to be open for health, but play your movements from the nails. By concentrating on the three nails, and therefore keeping your weight in the inside of the foot, you can accelerate your T'ai Chi development and avoid some common injuries. The most significant of these are injuries to the knee. When practitioners let too much weight rest on the middle or outside of the foot, which I call "foot roll-out," they get "knee-wobble" which can cause stress to the knee. When turning the body while winding up, for example, do not let your foot roll out so the weight is on the outside of the foot and the big toe lifts up. Keep all three nails of the substantial (weight-bearing) foot connected to the ground with the knee directly above the first two nails. At the same time, do not let either foot pronate, or roll inward so that the outside edge lifts away from the ground. Just practice finding the most relaxed and easy alignment with gravity.





A variety of joint problems can result from ignoring foot-knee mechanics, by over-relaxation of the leg, or by sinking too low without the support of a secure root. Playing too low for your overall mechanics places undue stress on the knees and back. Rooting through the three nails first, then letting your body tell you what is your natural height to play can relieve this problem. Follow your natural instincts. As a rule of thumb: If it hurts your joints, especially your knees, don't do it.

Regarding the bow stance, it is important to keep your forward knee over the foot, primarily over the second nail, when energizing forward movements. When delivering a move, do not shift your weight or advance your forward knee. The root is already there in the forward foot, so there is no need to shift. Again quoting Grandmaster Chen, "Keep the screwdriver over the screw." When the three active nails are strongly secured in the ground, your mind and body can relax. In turn, a relaxed body and quiet mind will ease the joints, soften the muscles, and open all the vessels and meridians. This allows the inner energy to flow easily and the body to move freely, all without interrupting the root.

One practices T'ai Chi slowly for many reasons. Among them, you relax; your mind becomes quiet; you learn to correct movement flaws and develop powerful energy flow. As you learn to move slowly as if you were moving quickly, you will discover the essential mechanics for your body. Practice this and you can achieve the beautiful, fluid movement of Tai Chi Chuan.

### EXERCISE 31. Sinking

Stand upright with an erect posture. When inhaling notice that the body slightly rises as the lungs fill. When exhaling wilfully relax all the muscle joints and tendons while maintaining an erect posture, allowing tension to sink and root out through the feet. Do this for 5 minutes at the start of every practice.

### EXERCISE 32.

#### Rooting the Three Nail Points

Visualise roots of energy extending from the centre of the Bubbling Well Cavity in the arch of the feet down about 1 metre into the ground. From this point then visualise tiny branches extending about ½metre horizontally from the vertical root. Feel each of the three points: arch, big toe, ball and heel on both feet in contact with the ground. Picture nails extending down about 10cm from each of the three points on the bottom of the feet into the ground. As you inhale imagine drawing in energy up through these roots and into the body. As you exhale relax and sink allowing the tension to flow down through the roots and out into the ground. Do this for 5 minutes at the start of every practice.







Tai Chi has its roots in Chi Kung. Chi Kung means energy exercises. It was first practised in China over 3000 years ago, but may have originated much earlier in India. Early Chi Kung masters, who lived in peace and harmony with nature, discovered how to create a powerful healing energy field around their body that increased their vitality and strength, and allowed them to live long and healthy lives.

About 1000 years ago remote villages in China began to develop internal martial arts by combining Chi Kung and animal and bird movements, with external martial arts and fighting styles, such as Shaolin Kung Fu, to create a dance of energy - Tai Chi Chuan - the Grand Ultimate Fist. So powerful was this new internal fighting style that over the centuries Tai Chi Chuan became regarded as the highest form of martial arts. It allowed the dedicated student to reach the highest levels of health and combat.

Traditional Chinese Medicine has been using non-combat styles of Chi Kung and Tai Chi for centuries, for its therapeutic relaxing movements and meditations inspired by the laws of nature. Research at the Beijing College of Traditional Chinese Medicine shows that Chi Kung and Tai Chi breathing, movement and meditation techniques prolong life, promote stress-free healthy functioning, and assist healing. Chi Kung is an integral part of Tai Chi training and is always practised at the start of Tai Chi training sessions. As we get older our joints stiffen, the flow of chi is reduced starving the body of vital energy. We may not realise we are stiff and may even have been carrying it around for a long time. In time the body accommodates stiffness by re-adjusting the skeleton around the stiffness, which leaves us with a misaligned skeleton and restricted chi flow. In order for the chi to flow freely throughout the entire body the joints must be relaxed, like water passing through a garden hose. If there is stiffness in the joints chi will back-up like water behind a kink in the hose. We can re-align the skeleton and chi flow through relaxation, proper posture and gentle rotations of the joints. To prevent stiffness, special attention should be given to loosening and levelling the waist and allowing the spine to hang vertically throughout your practice.

In ancient times, Internal Strength was the first thing a Tai Chi Chuan master would teach his students. It provided them with a strong foundation on which to build the rest of the art. However, as society became more complex; and teachers began to depend on Tai Chi Chuan for a living and thus taught more students, it came to be that Internal Strength was only taught to those students who had a sound character and would not abuse or misuse what they had learned. It took time to assess students in this way and so, nowadays, students will normally be taught the Hand Form and Pushing Hands first. Indeed, most self-styled masters only know the Hand Form and one or two styles of the Pushing Hands.

Internal Strength is the most important part of the art of Tai Chi Chuan, as well as being the most mysterious and least understood. The creator of Tai Chi Chuan, Chang San-feng, found that skill alone was insufficient especially when facing more than one opponent. There is an old saying in the Chinese martial arts, "two hands cannot deal with four". In other words, when faced with more than one opponent even if our defense is good, we must expect to take some punishment. If our body is weak we may sustain severe injuries, while our own blows will lack power and will not hurt our opponent enough to stop him, even if they hit a vital point. This means that before we can be good fighters we need to develop a strong physique. Chang San-feng solved these problems by developing a special exercise called Internal Strength which faithfully follows the Yin Yang theory.

The Internal Strength regulates breathing and improves blood circulation, Practice loosens and relaxes the joints, making our movements more fluid, which it turn leads to quicker reactions and greater speed in attack and defense. Our sense of balance will also improve with practice.

The Wutan School of Tai Chi Chuan emphasizes the Yin and Yang in the Internal Strength. Traditionally, there is a series of twelve Yin exercises and a complementary series of twelve Yang exercises. The Yin exercises are designed to develop our health and physique and are of especial value when the student has had a history of psychological problems. such as nervous breakdown, or where he suffers from a physical ailment such as stomach ulcers. It is for this reason that the Yin styles are taught first. The Yang styles are designed to increase our power and physical strength, though the Yin styles also do this, but to a lesser extent. As well as physical and mental benefits, some of both the Yin and Yang styles have a practical combat application. In China, before being taught the Internal Strength it is necessary for the student to undergo a simple initiation ceremony in which respects are paid to a portrait of Chang San-feng, the founder, before which the student promises to be bound by the Twelve Commandments of Wutan Tai Chi Chuan.

The Internal School or Soft Style of the Tai Chi Chuan has its origins in Taoism. Because Taoism lays great emphasis on education and morality, anyone who wishes to be a disciple of Wutan School of Tai Chi Chuan and learn the Internal Strength, must first take part in a ceremony in memory of the founder, solemnly promising before a portrait of him that he will obey the Twelve Commandments.

There are three stages in Tai Chi Internal Strength. The first stage, called Inner and Outer in Unity is where our breathing becomes one with our actions. The second stage, called Mind and Body in Unity is where our minds directs our every action. The third stage, called Heaven and Thought in Unity is beyond technique. To quote the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu, "Heaven and Earth were born with me and all things in them merge with me." This implies that Chuang Tzu had reached the stage where he could forget his physical self, though its existence continued in the real world. A man who reaches this level in the study of martial arts may justifiably claim himself to be a Grand Master.

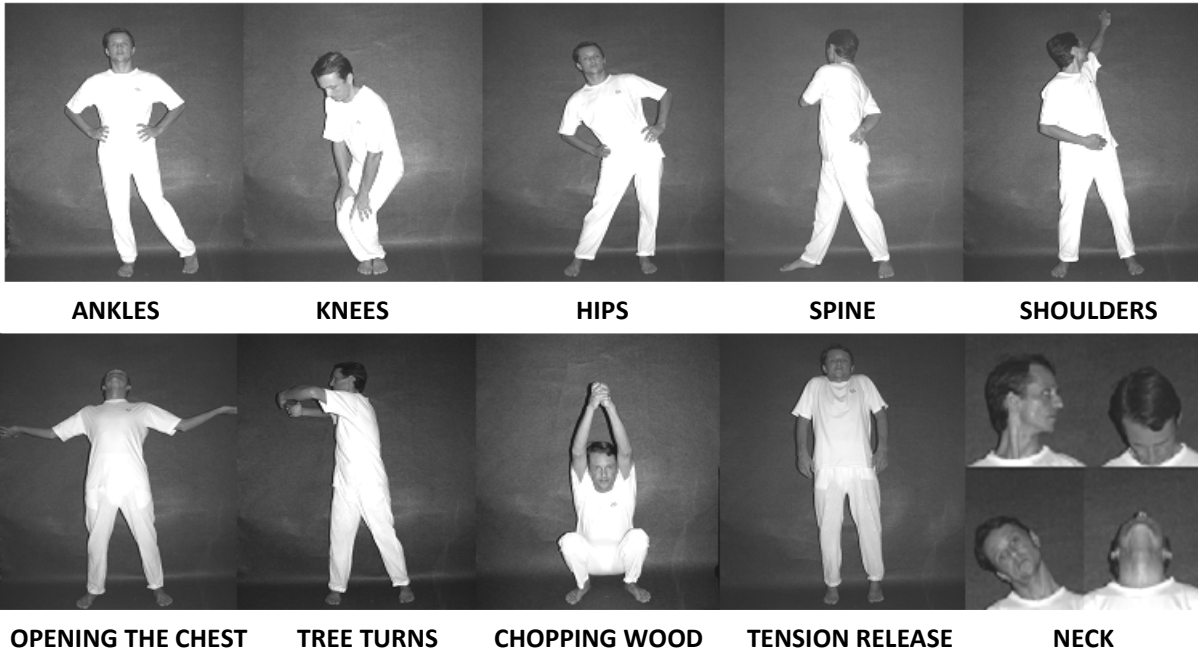
To develop Internal Strength and prepare the mind and body for Tai Chi, this book advises regular practice of the following exercises:

- **Tao Nature Meditations**
- **Opening the Heart Meditations**
- **Six Healing Sounds**
- **Inner Smile Meditation**
- **Relaxation Meditations**
- **Centering Meditations**
- **Sinking and Rooting the Three Nail Points**
- **Opening the Gates**
- **Gathering the Chi**
- **Eight Pieces of Brocade**
- **Five Animal Exercises**
- **Lower Dan Tien Meditation**
- **Microcosmic Orbit Meditation**
- **Chi Diet and Nutrition**

## OPENING THE GATES

### Warm-up Exercises

www.taichibali.com



### EXERCISE 34. Opening the Gates

Opening the Gates is a simple Chi Kung warm-up exercise that loosens and warms all the major joints of the body, preparing the body for smooth internal energy or chi flow. Stretching increases the energy flow by aligning the body, relaxing the muscles and opening the joints of the body. Throughout this set breathe deeply, fully and evenly through the nose. Feel the abdomen expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale. Do not force this, let it happen naturally. Deep breathing helps to relax the body whilst stimulating your internal energy. Let the tongue gently touch the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. Relax and loosen up. These warm-ups should be performed every day straight after waking up in the morning, and especially before meditation and Tai Chi practice.

### MEDITATION

In many Chinese martial arts, meditation is considered to be an important component of basic training. Meditation can be used to develop focus and mental clarity, and is the basis for Chi Kung and Tai Chi training. Meditation is often one of the most challenging parts of Tai Chi for beginning students to learn. It can be a difficult thing to just step out of our fast paced lives and all of a sudden go into a still and quiet place. We're not used to it, so the lack of being involved in external stimulus can seem boring at first. However, this boredom does not last for long. Meditation is also one of the most important aspects of Tai Chi. Tai Chi has an attitude of uncovering the stillness within motion, and it is only through meditation that we can realize this. It grounds us, teaches us to centre ourselves both emotionally and physically, shows us how to be in the moment, and builds up tremendous leg strength from the inside out. It is through doing meditation that our Tai Chi movements will be filled with relaxation and that flowing, beautiful grace that it is known for.

What should one try to make happen in meditation? Absolutely nothing. The idea is to fully experience, in a very grounded way, whatever it is that happens. Sometimes this will be nothing more than a serene sense of peace and clarity. Other times experiences could include visual, auditory, or tactile sensations. And energy flow within ourselves can be a wonderful thing to allow and observe. There are also physical changes in health and emotional attitudes that will start to change and open. Each person will have their own,

The beginning student should learn not to fear any sensations, thoughts, or feelings experienced in meditation. The idea is to be able to ground and centre yourself, and from this position just allow and observe the experience. By doing this there is no limit to what we can learn about ourselves, why we think or act certain ways, the depth to which our bodymindspirit is connected, and our relationship to life. Standing meditation is the most basic posture in Chi Kung, and Tai Chi is a form of Chi Kung. Simple standing is usually done first to ground and centre ourselves, and begin to open and fill our energy centres. Standing is then followed by some warm-up Chi Kung exercises. These exercises build up our chi and harmonize the meridians. Finally we do moving Tai Chi to flow the abundance of chi throughout our bodies like the wind and water. The Taoist definition of health is "the smooth, harmonious, abundant, and appropriate flow of chi".



## MICROCOSMIC ORBIT MEDITATION BY MANTAK CHIA

This is one of the most important meditations in this book. The Microcosmic Orbit is the main energetic circuit; it feeds all the other channels in the body. Opening the orbit and removing blockages along its energetic pathway releases more chi to vitalize the entire body. Through this practice we learn to recognize what chi feels like while circulating it through the Governor meridian (running up the back) and the Functional meridian (coming down the front of the body). When we can feel chi moving through the body, we will know if our Tai Chi posture is structurally correct by observing whether the posture opens or shuts off the energetic flow in the body. It is easier to learn the basics of chi circulation during sitting meditation, when we are not distracted by having to move and pay attention to the other hundreds of details of the Tai Chi form. Once we have become familiar with the feeling of chi circulation, we will easily begin to integrate this into the Tai Chi movements.

The Microcosmic Orbit Meditation does not consist of stilling the mind, watching the breath, visualizing a deity or symbol, or reciting a mantra. It is rather a process for generating and circulating a warm, tingling current of ch'i (vital energy) around the body at the midline: up the spine, over the head and face, down the chest and belly, under the genitals, and back up the spine, over and over again. This is not an imagined movement of one's attention over the skin, but a very palpable flow that takes the meditator into a peaceful yet energized state. According to Master Mantak Chia, when properly performed, the Microcosmic Orbit meditation confers profound and lasting health benefits, strengthening and cleansing the internal organs from within. Once the Taoist student is proficient in the technique, he or she need only focus the attention on the navel, and the circulation of warm, healing energy will begin automatically. To become proficient, however, the student must first learn to generate chi in the navel, then to open 12 more centers along the Microcosmic Orbit route, and then to pass the chi through each center until it begins to circulate by itself. According to Master Chia, with 15-30 minutes of practice twice a day, this practice can be learned in anywhere from several days to a year or two.

The Microcosmic Orbit meditation can be practised sitting on the edge of a chair or cross-legged on a cushion. The back should be comfortably erect and the head bowed, slightly. (Because sexual energy is a part of the chi that circulates through the body, men should allow the scrotum to hang freely off the edge of the chair, to keep it from being constricted in any way). The hands are clasped gently in the lap, with the left hand on the bottom and the right hand on top. The process used for generating energy in the navel is also used for generating energy in and opening each successive point along the route. The Taoist student concentrates on the navel and directs the inner vision there, even though the eyes remain closed. He or she presses firmly on the navel with the index finger for a minute or so, then returns to the hands-folded position, concentrating on the residual sensation of finger pressure. This is done repeatedly until a sensation of warmth, tingling, tightness, or expansion (or all of these) arises at the navel center. Once the sensation has been established, the student sits with it until the end of the meditation. (Each meditation session lasts from 15 to 30 minutes.) Some people will feel a strong and continuing warmth in the navel after only a few sessions; others may need to focus and concentrate there twice daily for several weeks before any stable sensation arises. Each meditation is ended by circling the navel with the right fist. Men circle the navel 36 times clockwise, making ever larger circles (but no larger than 6 inches in diameter), and 24 times counter-clockwise, in circles that gradually become smaller. Women make 36 counter-clockwise and 24 clockwise circles.

After the meditator has learned to summon energy easily to the navel center (and the finger technique is no longer needed), he or she begins to practice on the next center, the Ovary Palace or Sperm Palace, using the same techniques as for the navel center. After this center is

easily filled with chi - that is becomes warm and tingling - the student learns to open the next center, and so on around the route. Several days to weeks may be spent on each center in turn. However, the meditation always starts with the navel center and the open centers that follows it, with, several minutes spent concentrating on each. And every meditation ends by gathering energy back into the navel with the fist - circling method. Chi is not generated in the centers, as it is in the navel rather, the centers are opened so the chi can flow freely. The Taoists believe (and the meditation confirms this belief) that the chi will flow nationally through the Microcosmic Orbit as long as the various centers are not blocked. Since many centers on most people are blocked, however the initial stages of the Microcosmic Orbit concentrate on unblocking them. The most effective way of cleansing a blocked center is to focus chi there twice daily for several weeks.

### **EXERCISE 35. Basic Microcosmic Orbit Meditation**

**Relaxation:** Sit quietly and comfortably with the eyes closed and the spine straight. Relax as much as possible. Relax the breathing, allowing the body to breathe naturally on its own. For a few minutes allow your body, breath and mind to relax and harmonize. Begin with the Inner Smile.

#### **Activating the Original Chi in the Lower Dan Tien:**

Focus the awareness on the Lower Dan Tien, breathing naturally using lower abdominal breathing. Use your intention to create a feeling of warmth in the Lower Dan Tien. Feel it as the reservoir of your Original Chi, the main battery of your entire energetic system. Imagine that each breath is like a bellows, fanning the fire in the Lower Dan Tien. Hold your awareness there until you feel Lower Dan Tien is filled with chi.

#### **Moving the Energy in the Functional Channel:**

1. Navel: Move your awareness to the navel and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
2. Sex Organs - Sperm/Ovary Palace: Then bring your awareness to the sexual centre above the pubic bone and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
3. Perineum - Gate of Life and Death: Then bring your awareness to the perineum midway between the anus and the penis or vagina and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.

#### **Moving the Energy in the Governor Channel:**

4. Tailbone - Sacrum Pump - Coccyx: Bring your awareness to the coccyx at the tip of the tailbone and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
5. Kidneys Opposite Navel - Door of Life: Bring your awareness to the kidneys and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
6. Opposite Solar Plexus - Adrenal Pump: Bring your awareness to the T11 and T12 point in the spine and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
7. Opposite Heart Centre: Bring your awareness to the T5 and T6 point in the spine and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
8. Opposite Throat Centre: Bring your awareness to the C7 point in the spine and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
9. Base of the Skull - Cranial Pump - Jade Pillow: Bring your awareness to the base of the skull and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.
10. Crown Centre: Bring your awareness to the top of the crown and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.



**11. Eyebrow Centre - Pituitary Gland:** Bring your awareness to the mid-eyebrow/third eye in the centre of the head and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.

**Connect the Two Channels:**

**12. Heavenly Pool:** Bring your awareness to where the tip of the tongue meets the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. This connects the two main channels of the Microcosmic Orbit. Press and release the tongue against the palate 9 times. This conducts the chi energy from the brow centre through the bridge and tip of the nose into the palate and on to the throat centre. It activates the palate point and enables the energy to flow down the Conceptional channel.

**Complete the Circulation of the Functional Channel:**

**13. Throat Centre:** Bring your awareness to the throat gland and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.

**14. Heart Centre:** Bring your awareness to the centre of the chest and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.

**15. Solar Plexus:** Bring your awareness to the base of the sternum and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point.

**1. Navel:** Move your awareness back to the navel and concentrate there for a few minutes until you feel the energy has gathered at that point. This completes one cycle of the Microcosmic Orbit.

**Continue to Circulate the Microcosmic Orbit:**

Circulate the energy through the entire cycle 9 or 10 times. As you gain experience, you can increase the circulations to 36, 72, 108, or 360. At some point you may feel the energy start to move by itself., this is a good sign; if it happens, do not try to restrain it, just let it flow on its own.

**Connect to the Chi of Heaven, Earth and Man:**

**Earth Energy:** Once you have opened the Microcosmic Orbit, open the soles of the feet to the earth and allow the Earth energy to ascend the legs to the perineum to join the microcosmic Orbit. You may experience the energy as a cool blue light.

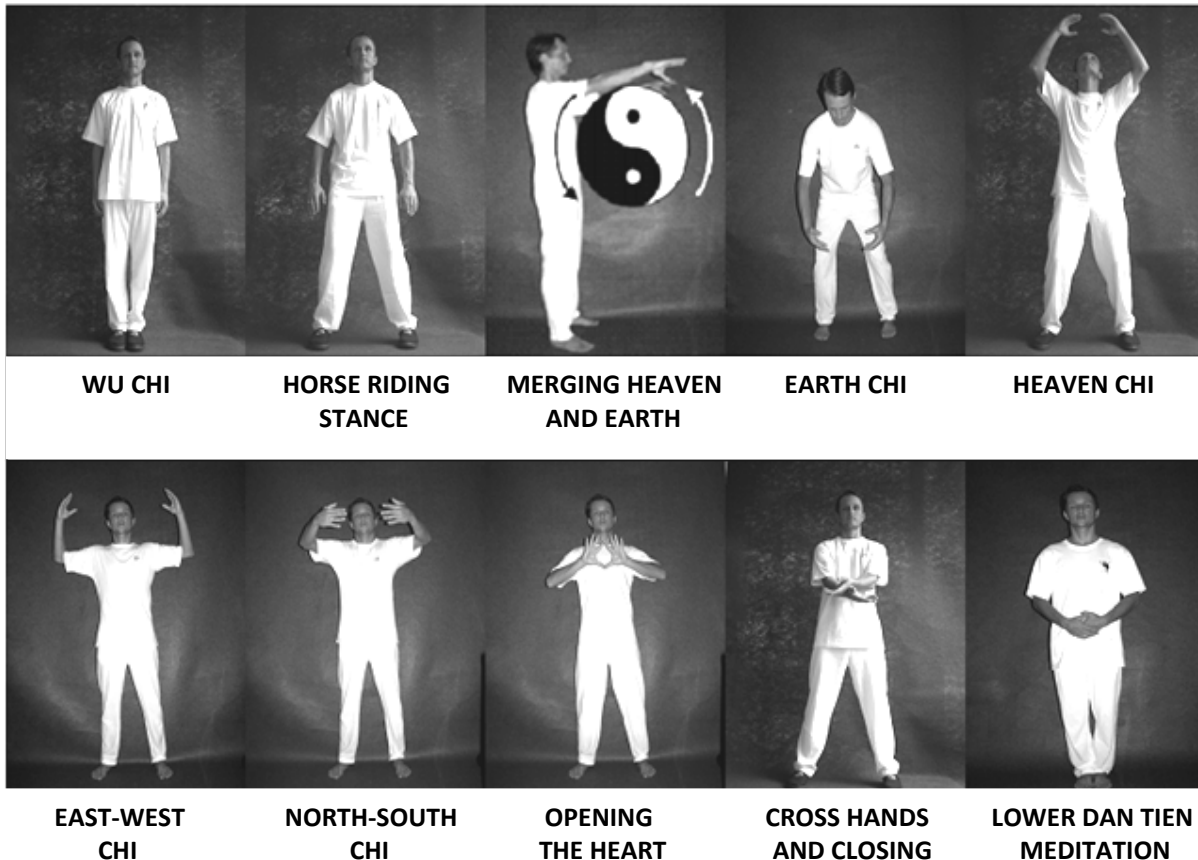
**Heavenly Force:** When the energy reaches the top of the head, open the Crown Point to receive the Heavenly force and join it with the Microcosmic Orbit. You may experience this as a warm violet light coming from the North Star.

**Mid-eyebrow Centre:** Guide the energy to the third eye centre, relax the brow and join it with the Inner Smile energy. You may experience this as a golden light. Allow this golden light to join with the Microcosmic Orbit.

**Navel:** Guide the energy back to the navel. Finish with collecting and storing the energy at the navel by spiralling 36 times outwards and 24 times inwards. Before getting up, become aware of your surroundings, the floor, the room, the chair. Slowly begin to move your fingers and toes. Gently open your eyes.



**GATHERING THE CHI**  
**Liu Fan Wei - Chi Kung Set 1**  
[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)



**EXERCISE 36. Gathering the Chi from the Six Directions**

Gathering the Chi is designed to absorb the fresh chi of the morning, get your life force moving in the body after a night of sleep, and to prepare your thoughts for a calm and balanced day. Chi Kung is always practiced before Tai Chi, and can also be used to prepare your mind and body or other spiritual practices, such as yoga and meditation. To get the most out of your Chi Kung practice be sure to follow the Training Guidelines and that you have warmed up by Opening the Gates. Remember to move slowly and gracefully with full awareness on the Lower Dan Tien. Relax your body, and calm your mind before beginning. Do Tai Chi Breathing.

Chi Kung and Tai Chi exercises emphasize respecting the natural curves of the body. Your neck, back, legs, and arms are all naturally curved or bent in a particular direction. Legs should be slightly bent; don't lock your knees. Arms should be slightly bent; don't lock your elbows. You should not move in ways that bend or curve the body away from or counter to their natural curve or bend. To do so is to risk hyperextension and painful injuries to your muscles, ligaments, tendons, cartilage, joints, or bones. Highly conditioned athletes might be able to push the limits; but, ordinary folks, sensible people, need to be very careful and use restraint when performing Chi Kung and Tai Chi movements and postures. Remember to keep the spine in neutral to avoid injury, maintain a centerline, move from the waist, and always coordinate the movement with the breath. *Chi flows in the path of least resistance*, so stay loose and relaxed throughout your practice. *Where the mind goes energy follows*, so be present in the moment, be in the movement with clear intention and purpose, and let the chi flow in harmony throughout your whole being.

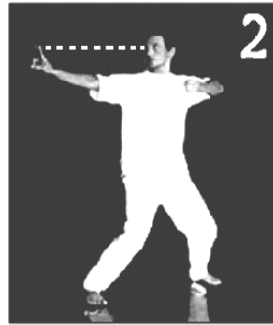
## EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE

### Ba Duan Jin - Chi Kung Set 2

www.taichibali.com



**TWO HANDS HOLD UP HEAVEN**  
To circulate the chi and relax all organs



**BEND BOW LIKE SHOOTING A HAWK**  
To strengthen the kidneys and waist



**SEPERATE HEAVEN AND EARTH**  
To strengthen the spleen and stomach



**WISE OWL GAZES BACKWARDS**  
To remove all weakness in the organs



**BEAR SWIMGS FROM SIDE TO SIDE**  
To remove the fire in the heart



**TWO HANDS HOLD THE FEET**  
To strengthen the kidneys and waist



**SCREW THE FISTS WITH FIERI EYES**  
To increase chi and raise vitality



**BOUNCING ON THE TOES**  
To smooth the chi flow & remove disease

### EXERCISE 37. Eight Pieces of Brocade

Eight Pieces of Brocade, or Ba Duan Jin, is a probably the most popular and enjoyable series of Chi Kung exercises in China. These eight simple exercises date back as far as 2,000 years ago. History credits this particular version to Marshal Yue Fei (1127-1279 A.D.) who created them to improve the health and vitality of his soldiers. It has since been used by both warriors and monks for health and meditation purposes, and are also used as warm-ups for Tai Chi. These eight exercises have a powerful therapeutic effect in stimulating the central nervous system, lowering blood pressure, relieving stress, and toning muscles without strain. They also enhance digestion, elimination of wastes and the circulation of blood.

### FIVE ANIMAL EXERCISES

#### Wu Qin Xi - Chi Kung Set 3

www.taichibali.com



**CRANE STYLE**



**BEAR STYLE**



**DEER STYLE**



**TIGER STYLE**



**MONKEY STYLE**

Wu Qin Xi, the Five Animals Chi Kung, is a very old therapeutic exercise. It was created to build up health and prolong life by imitating the movements of five animals - tiger, deer, monkey, bear and crane. The Five Animals Chi Kung was created by Hua Tuo, who lived during the Han dynasty about 2000 years ago. Hua Tuo was a highly skilled physician, famous for his advanced surgical techniques. Hua Tuo believed that appropriate amounts of exercise were essential to health. He pointed out that body movement prevents disease by

promoting digestion and absorption and ensuring smooth circulation of blood. He compared this to a door hinge, which in ancient China were made out of leather. If the hinge was used regularly it would stay strong and supple but through lack of use it would wither and become brittle and weak.

Hua Tuo practised the exercises diligently, and vigorously popularized the set which is still practiced in China today because of its effectiveness. The Five Animals set can be used to increase health and vitality and prevent disease as well as help in the recovery from illness. According to "The Life of Hua Tuo" in The Book of Eastern Han, Hua Tuo "looked vigorous and strong at the age of 100." His disciple "Wu Pu practiced the exercises and could still hear and see well, and had a complete set of firm teeth when he was over 90 years old."



### EXERCISE 38. Five Animal Exercises

Each animal movement is designed to stimulate one of the major energy systems of the body. The tiger movement invigorates the lung energy; the bear movement can relieve stagnation of qi in the liver; the deer strengthens the stomach; the monkey reinforces the kidney; and the crane balances the qi in the heart. It is the special ability to balance and regulate all the functions of the five internal organs central to Chinese medicine that makes this exercise so effective. In China, it is considered valuable for people with a variety of chronic conditions, including pulmonary emphysema, hypertension, coronary heart disease, peptic ulcer, insomnia, and anxiety/depression.

The Five Animals Chi Kung are one of the most ancient and popular sets of medical Chi Kung exercises. Passed down for nearly 2,000 years, it is an effective and playful way to energize the entire body. Animals have a natural way of gathering and storing chi. By imitating the movements and spirit of the Crane, Bear, Deer, Tiger, and Monkey, we can increase longevity and strength, both inside and out, and enjoy excellent health. These exercises combine the contemplation and replication of nature into meditative movement. There are over 3000 different styles of Chi Kung, with many different variations of the Five Animal movements. It is highly recommended that these exercises must be learned from a qualified and experienced Chi Kung master to avoid misunderstandings and possible injury.





Tai Chi is a Chinese form of exercise for people of all ages, which has gained an enthusiastic reception from all over the world. The source from which this popularity springs can be traced to the physical and mental benefits which result from putting into practice the philosophical concepts on which the art is based. The founder of Tai Chi was Chang San-Feng, a Taoist monk, who may have been born in 1247 AD. His accomplishments were such that during the Ming Dynasty news of his fame reached the ears of the Emperor himself. Titles and honors were showered on Master Chang, and a magnificent mansion was built for him on Wutan Mountain as a special gift from the provincial governor. One of the greatest Tai Chi masters was Yang Lu-Chan (1799-1872 AD) who, during the Ching Dynasty, served as the chief combat instructor of the Imperial Guard. He practiced Tai Chi Chuan for many years, and his fighting ability earned him the nickname "Invincible Yang". This gives us a good idea of the high esteem in which Tai Chi was held in those days.

Tai Chi is an art which demands a high degree of skill and intelligence if mastery is to be achieved. It is not enough for us to practice hard, though this is necessary; we must find a good master as well. Only a good master can correctly demonstrate techniques to his students, identify their faults, and give them the proper advice and guidance which will enable them to progress. A man who practices alone or who follows a poor teacher will progress very slowly and will never be able to realize his full potential.

It is common knowledge that the practice of Tai Chi is beneficial to health, but few people are aware that Tai Chi is also a subtle, sophisticated and scientific method of self-defense. The main reason for this ignorance lies in the fact that most Tai Chi Chuan masters are themselves ignorant of the self-defense side of the art, and are thus only capable of teaching Tai Chi Chuan for health. Without a doubt a student who trains under such a teacher will find that his health will improve, but equally without doubt he will be incapable of facing martial artists of other styles in combat with any prospect of success. For such a contest we need a truly practical method of combat, if we are to defeat our opponent.

One of the popular misconceptions about the martial arts is the belief that the son of a famous master will be a more skillful martial artist than the other students because he is much closer to the master than any of them. However, we are not dealing with horse-racing, where careful breeding can produce a thoroughbred. Chinese Kung Fu is an art, and so a high level of knowledge and ability can only be achieved if the student is highly motivated and prepared to put in years of practice and study to achieve success.

Success is the return we get from an injection of capital in the form of constant practice and study. Even if a great master wishes to impart all his knowledge to his son, his intentions will never be realized if the son is not interested in learning. Furthermore, if he is forced to learn the art, the son will take in very little and easily forget what he has just learned. The case of the disciple is quite different; he is so interested in learning the art that he is willing to expend all the effort, time and money he can afford in order to make maximum progress.

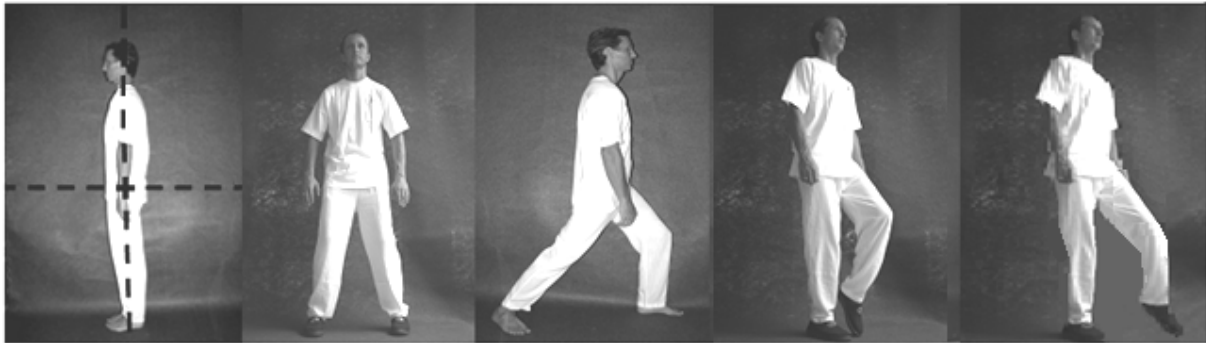
### **EXERCISE 33. Body Alignment**

Here are a few of the classical potures that are used throughout all Tai Chi styles. These body alignment techniques will help you to achieve smooth and flowing movement and are very beneficial for the free passage of chi around the body. Remember never to force your body into any movement. During your practice maintain your centreline in the sine, and go as far into each leg and arm position as you comfortably can. Even if your

movements are slight you will still gain the benefits of the exercise. Focus on the Lower Dan Tien with relaxed breathing, move from the waist, and maintain your awareness of weight distribution to remain balanced and centred throughout.

## BODY ALIGNMENT

[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)



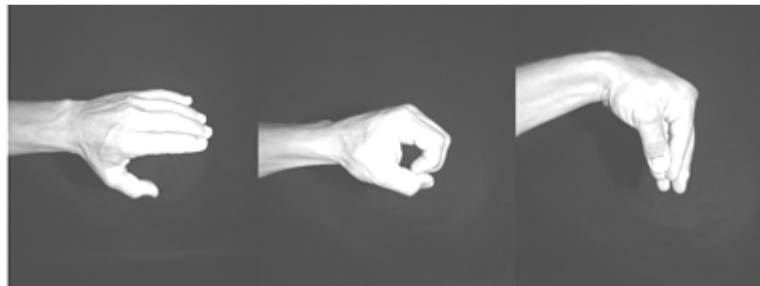
**MAINTAINING  
A CENTERLINE**

**HORSE RIDING  
STANCE**

**BOW AND ARROW  
STANCE**

**T-STEP**

**EMPTY STEP**



**PALM**

**FIST**

**HOOK**

## BODY ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

### UPPER BODY

1. Head level as if suspended from above by a string.
2. Maintain a centreline from the crown of the head to the tailbone.
3. Eyes looking forward as if at an opponent.
4. Jaw relaxed.
5. Shoulders loose and down.
6. Chest relaxed.
7. Elbows down and in, near to the body.

### MID BODY

8. Hips level and aligned.
9. Pelvis up and forward.
10. Waist relaxed and level.
11. Hands relaxed in Tiger's Mouth.

### LOWER BODY

12. Knees unlocked.
13. One knee fully straightened and one knee bent during turns.
14. Step softly heel first.
15. Five Nail points rooted and flat on the ground.
16. Equal distance from the centre between forward foot and rear foot.



## TAI CHI AND POSTURE

BY BILL WALSH

In Tai Chi Chuan, posture is related to mechanical efficiency. Tai Chi Chuan is a slow-moving choreography that asks its practitioners to sense each minute shift of weight while paying attention to the Tai Chi principles. Lift the head suggests we delicately lift the head as if we were supporting a light object on top of it. There is a specific spot on the crown of the head that should extend towards heaven. This idea keeps the practitioner lengthening the spine and consciously improving posture during practice. Yang Cheng-fu, third generation Master of the Yang family, wrote a paper detailing ten principles that should accompany form practice (Chapter 12, Tai Chi Chuan Classics). In this paper he specifies the relationships between body parts that should be established by the mind and spirit's intention during practice.

It is important that form practice be done slowly. This requires moment-to-moment attentiveness to posture, enabling the practitioner to better perform each movement more efficiently. Better posture thus translates into better balance and flexible and greater strength.

There are two ways to enhance the benefits of Tai Chi as a postural exercise. The first is doing the Tai Chi form practice lower and slower. Slow and low transitions are more difficult to do smoothly because the load on the single weighted leg increases. The task then becomes one of smoothly transitioning between postures without bobbing up and down. This requires the practitioner to organize his or her posture between movements more carefully.

Standing in Posture means holding one posture for a period of time instead of moving from posture to posture. Standing in Posture puts more weight on one leg than the other. Tiring in that posture, the leg you are standing on starts to talk back. It hurts. It is under tremendous load. The proper response is to find any holding or bracing and let go, releasing those muscles. As the muscles are releasing, the spine is lengthening. Learning to release under load is an important prerequisite to doing "push hands" which cultivates the martial arts aspect of Tai Chi Chuan.

Practicing lower and slower, and Standing in Posture, are advanced exercises that should only be done under the guidance of a qualified teacher. Practicing any kind of Tai Chi Chuan helps posture, and practicing according to these guidelines increases the benefits considerably. Tai Chi Chuan not only improves posture and balance while doing the Tai Chi form, but in everyday activities as well.

The taiji form is a set of postures designed to express the taiji principles. Indeed, the oldest masters of Taiji did not practice a Taiji Form. They took basic postures from martial arts and health-exercise forms and infused them with specific (Taiji) principles. These basic postures are known as: the 5 Steps and the 8 Gates. Together they are called the core 13 Postures of Taijiquan. Practiced in an impromptu way, these basic moves were put together in various combinations that flowed into one another. This was the original way of taijiquan.

Alpha Holistics, Learning Tai Chi Chuan



### **FIST-HOLDING SALUTE**

The Chinese Wushu Association has set the Fist-holding Salute as the official greeting form for all martial arts masters and pupils in competitions, training and performance. It symbolises unity and modesty through correct guiding thoughts and noble morality, civilization and manners, working hard to improve one's skills, and cultivating moral character. This salute is respectfully given at the start and end of all Tai Chi classes.

#### **EXERCISE 39. Fist-holding Salute**

Stand upright with the feet together and the head facing your teacher or opponent. Make a fist with the right hand, put it against the center of the left palm with the left thumb bent and the four other fingers of the left hand stretched, push the two hands forward with the palms facing those greeted, arms in an embracing position and shoulders dropped down. The greeting should be done with ease and confidence. The bent left thumb indicates that the performer is not arrogant or high-handed; the left hand's four fingers coming together means an integrity of moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic education, a must for a Tai Chi performer to be noble-minded. The right fist indicates valour and vigor; the fist is stopped by the left palm which means being brave but not wishing to make trouble or breaking the rules. Learning Tai Chi does not necessarily mean fighting or violence. In executing a Fist-holding Salute, one should pay special attention to its inner meaning.

### **CALM AND RELAXED**

All movements in Tai Chi are performed with a relaxed body and a calm but concentrated mind, with the feet firmly rooted to the ground. Co-ordinate all parts as one, relating all parts to each other. Walk like a cat – light and firm. In moving backward, touch the toe down first. In moving forward, touch the heel first. Then as you shift your weight onto the foot let the rest of the sole gradually proceed into place. Make the hands and head move as part of the body and not independently. Almost all movements in Tai Chi are made circularly. This permits the reserving of energy, reduces tension and enhances relaxation. Keep the level of the body the same so that there is no rise and fall from shifts of body weight, and little squatting or bending at the waist. As you proceed through the postures you must think totally on them, so totally, in fact, that the mind embraces the postures and vice versa.

### **THE VALUE OF SLOWNESS**

The power of slowness is the foundation of Tai Chi. All movements in the Solo Forms are performed at the same slow pace throughout. There are no fast postures; they are all done at the same speed. You may vary the entire speed of the round, but not the speed of separate postures or forms. Slowness permits the mind to function at its fullest in

recognising and appreciating the unity of all the components of the body. Slowness allows the body to remain relaxed, acquire memory of all the aspects of movement, and allows the mind time to adjust and integrate the breath with energy movement. Practising Tai Chi forms slowly is similar to swimming in air in the sense that the movements appear to be heavy as if moving through water. There is also a feeling of buoyancy where the body feels as if it has become lighter and more supple which comes from having the feet firmly rooted to the ground. Imagining resistance in air also speeds up the experience of chi moving through the postures.

### **TAI CHI BREATHING**

As we have seen the origins of Tai Chi lie in Taoism. The Taoists themselves used a special method of breathing modelled on the respiratory system of the tortoise, whose hard shell limits the outward expansion of its lungs. Its lungs are therefore forced to expand by extending down the length of its body rather than outwards, thus making its breathing deep and harmonious. The tortoise may move slowly, but it lives a long time. This is why first the Taoists and later the founders of Tai Chi adopted and adapted this breathing method.

Our heart and lungs work incessantly to keep our body alive and in good health. To maintain this state of affairs we have a duty to protect them from too much stress and strain when we engage in exercise. Most forms of exercise require lung expansion when we inhale. This expansion forces our muscles and ribs outwards thus increasing the chest's capacity to take in air. However, this puts a lot of pressure on our lungs and can easily tire us out. In the same way, a car which is constantly travelling uphill will sooner or later develop engine trouble. In practising Tai Chi we do not use this common method of breathing, which is particularly unsuitable for the sick and those who have passed their prime. We concentrate instead on making our movements relaxed and harmonious and our postures natural so that our breathing will also be natural and not forced.

Constant practice of Tai Chi over a period of time will make our breathing slow and deep, while our internal organs will work in a gentle and harmonious fashion. When we inhale, our diaphragm will expand not only outwards, but also downwards in the direction of the abdomen, giving our lungs more space to expand downwards also. When we exhale, our lungs contract causing the diaphragm to contract also, both inwards and upwards. The rising and falling motions of the diaphragm help our lungs to function properly. At the same time the rhythmic nature of the diaphragm's movements act to massage our stomach and intestines, gently increasing the circulation of blood and transportation of nutrition. This whole process of respiration in Tai Chi is called "the downward extension of breath to the Dan Tien". (A point one-and-a-half-inches below the navel.)

This is not to say that our diaphragm can or does expand downwards to the Dan Tien, but only that the effect of the downward movement of the diaphragm is to cause the other organs of our body to expand downwards or to contract in proportion to the movements of the diaphragm. This effect is most keenly felt at the Dan Tien. What has happened is that the constant practice of Tai Chi relaxes the muscles of the diaphragm enabling it to expand downwards instead of merely outwards. There is a common misconception that the air we breathe is brought down to the Dan Tien. This is an illogical and unscientific notion.

#### **EXERCISE 40. Tai Chi Breathing**

Living in cold climates, we should at all times both inhale and exhale through the nose to keep the heat within our body. Our mouth should be kept shut and our tongue should rest gently against the roof of the mouth so that we can salivate and avoid a dry throat during practice. The importance of adopting this natural method of breathing is fundamental to practicing Tai Chi and reaping the benefits of doing so.

In hot climates however, inhale through the nose as you extend the arms outward or upward. Exhale through the mouth, to cool the mind and body, as you contract your arms

or bring them downward. The breathing is soft, slow and relaxed. Let the chi flow through the breath; let your spirit breathe throughout your mind and body.

Initially, it is best not to be too concerned about breathing. First learn the sequence of postures and then incorporate the breathing later. Later, correct breathing must be coordinated with your movements. Ultimately, the breathing becomes such an intrinsic part of the exercise that you will not even have to think about it. You are now ready to begin to learn the physical exercise aspect of Tai Chi, the Solo Forms. Remember, as you are learning the exercises, strive to form good habits based on the principles you have learned in previous chapters.

#### **EXERCISE 41. Standing Meditation**

The following step-by-step instructions for Standing Meditation should ideally be practiced 1 to 3 times daily. Start out by doing 5 minutes at a time, building up to 20 minutes, and not doing more than 45 minutes at one time. At any time that you notice your mind wandering, take it back to simply following your breath. You will soon find why it is that advanced students and The Masters do so much standing meditation.

Stand in the Wu Chi posture. Stand comfortably with your feet shoulder width apart. Make sure your toes are pointed straight ahead. There is a gentle, relaxed bend to the knees and they tend to push lightly outwards as opposed to collapsing inwards. The pelvis is tucked slightly forward so the lower spine is straight. The shoulders are loose and relaxed, not raised up, hands hang loosely at the sides. The head is held up as if suspended by a string. Breathing is done through the nose and is slow, soft, and deep. Eyes are either closed, or are slightly parted but not focused on anything.

Beginning the meditation by following the breath with your mind, feeling where it goes inside of you. Slowly scan your body from head to feet looking for any tension or discomfort. If any is found, use the mind to gently guide the breath there and as you exhale, imagine the tension flowing down and releasing into the Earth, dispersing. Focusing to activate specific energy centres.

Become aware of your feet and their connection to the Earth. Imagine that you are inhaling strong, clean energy from the Earth into the 3 Nail Points and centre of your feet, and exhaling used, turbid energy back into the Earth. Do this for 8.

Next let the energy from the Earth travel up the legs and into the Lower Dan Tien located just below the navel. This is our centre of inner strength and power. Imagine that you are inhaling pure, healing energy into your Lower Dan Tien, letting it fill your entire lower abdomen. Exhale, purging any unclean energy from this centre. Do this for 8.

Change the focus of your mind to the Middle Dan Tien, the heart centre located in the middle of the chest. This is our centre of love and compassion. Imagine that you are inhaling purified energy into the heart centre. Exhale, cleansing the heart and surrounding yourself with the feeling of compassion. Do this for 8.

Change the focus of your mind to the Upper Dan Tien, the eyebrow centre located behind the forehead in the mid-brain. This is our centre of higher consciousness. Imagine that you are inhaling clear and focused energy into the eyebrow centre. Exhale, cleansing the mind and connecting with the consciousness of the Universe. Do this for 8 breaths.

Now bring the focus of your mind back to the Lower Dan Tien, below the navel. Imagine a warm flow of energy filling this centre. As you both inhale and exhale, imagine a channel of energy extending upwards from the Lower Dan Tien to the heart centre, and continuing up to the eyebrow centre. This connects our body, spirit, and mind. Maintain this connection for 8 breaths.

Change the focus of your mind to the palms of your hands. Imagine breathing into the Lao Gong point at the centre of your palms and also exhaling from this point. Feel your hands filling and becoming surrounded in warm chi. Do this for 8 breaths. Finally, simply stand and follow your breath. Allow yourself to feel the energy flowing in and around your body. Do this for 10 minutes or longer.

#### **EXERCISE 42. Mindful Walking**

The goal of Mindful Walking is to prepare you for Solo Forms by focusing on the fine details of movement during slow walking. Some Tai Chi practitioners also like to meditate while they walk, grounding and centring their bodies as they travel. People can choose to use Mindful Walking as a method of exercise, or a mode of transportation, bringing consciousness to a move from point A to point B. There are a number of advantages to Mindful Walking as a form of exercise. For starters, no extra equipment is needed, because the walker has all the tools he or she needs at foot, as it were. In addition, Mindful Walking is very gentle, making it suitable for people of all ages and at all levels of physical ability. It can also be a very companionable form of exercise, as people can walk alone or in groups, depending on preference. It is a slow exercise requiring 20 – 30 minutes per session.

In Mindful Walking, body weight is very deliberately and slowly transferred from foot to foot, with the focus being on the creation of a smooth, even gait which feels almost like flowing or rolling, rather than stomping along. The gentle shift of weight encourages people to use all of the muscles in their legs as they walk, and is said to stimulate the flow of Chi, or life force, around the body and through the legs. As a general rule, the gait involved in Mindful Walking is slow, smooth, and very rhythmic. Walkers are encouraged to think of their bodies as being very light, placing each toe, ball and heel, deliberately and firmly, yet lightly on the ground as they walk. Some people say that after 10 minutes practice of Mindful Walking they feel sort of like boats bobbing along a stream.

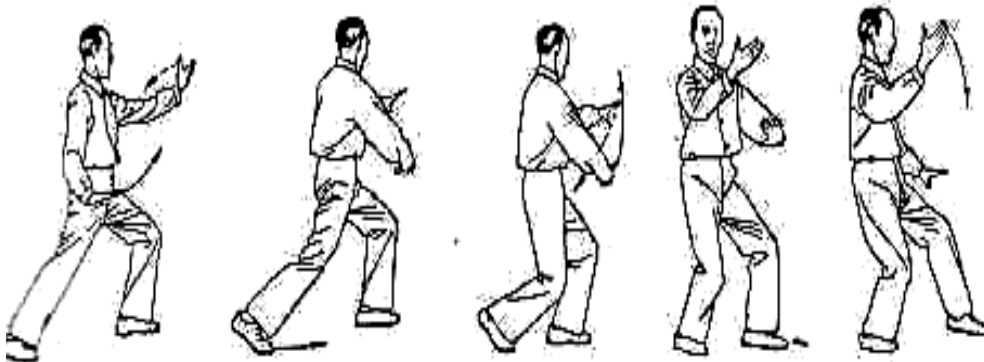
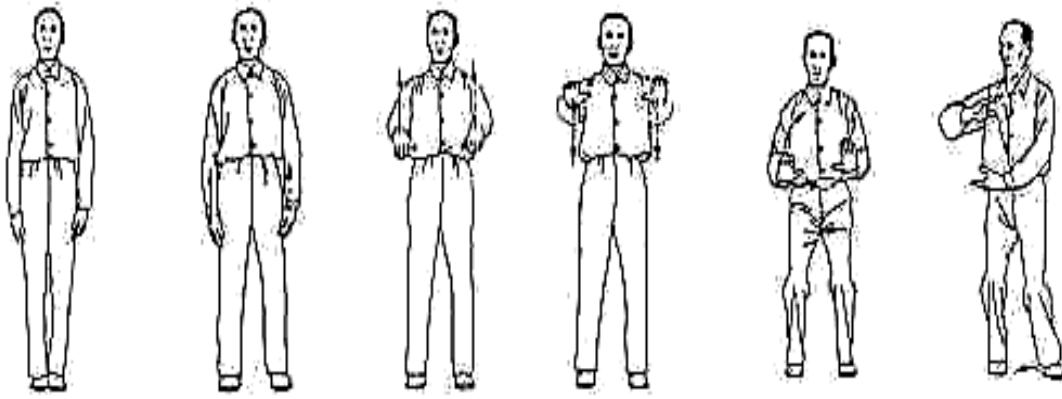
#### **EXERCISE 43. Tai Chi Walking**

After practising Mindful Walking, move on to Tai Chi Walking, which contains the first 3 Forms from the Yang Style Simplified 24 Forms: Form 1. Opening, Form 2. Part the Wild horse's Mane, and Form 3. White Crane Spreads Wings. Tai Chi Walking is easy to learn and a great exercise for beginners because it trains the body through emphasis on correct body posture, spinal alignment and weight distribution using repetitive movements. Students walk 20 metres in one direction, practising the slow, rhythmic form of Part the Wild horse's Mane, 10 to 20 times. It is performed with deep concentration moving from the waist area. Tai Chi Walking teaches fullness and emptiness by moving weight from leg to leg which is common to many Tai Chi exercises, as is strengthening the arms, legs and hands through repeated extension and lifting. Tai Chi Walking varies the load on joint surfaces increasing the flow of natural lubricant and nutrients into the joint, meaning that they move more easily and freely. Always start by training with the legs only, resting the hands on the Lower Dan Tien. This will help you to develop grounded and relaxed movements after the hands are added.

The taiji form is therefore, a set of postures designed to express the taiji principles. Indeed, the oldest masters of taiji did not practice a "taiji form." They took basic postures from martial arts and health-exercise forms and infused them with specific (taiji) principles. These basic postures are known as: the 5 steps and the 8 gates. Together they are called the core "13 postures of taijiquan." Practiced in an impromptu way, these basic moves were put together in various combinations that flowed into one another. This was the original way of taijiquan.

Alpha Holistics, Learning Tai Chi Chuan

# TAI CHI WALKING







**SONG OF PUSH HANDS**  
by Unknown Author

Be conscientious in Peng, Lu, Ji, and An.  
Upper and lower coordinate,  
and the opponent finds it difficult to penetrate.  
Let the opponent attack with great force;  
Use four ounces to overcome a thousand pounds.  
Attract to emptiness and discharge;  
Zhan, Lian, Nian, Sui,  
no resisting no letting go.

**PUSHING HANDS**

Tai Chi does not identify a negative energy as an opponent, but rather sees it an opportunity to transform the negative into positive. Anything or anyone that can identify energy fullness and emptiness, substantial and insubstantial, can use Tai Chi to their advantage. This can only be achieved if the principles of Yin and Yang are thoroughly understood and applied with spontaneous response through the regular practise of the Tai Chi Solo Forms and study of Tao philosophy.

Pushing hands uses a soft style martial art technique to know the energy that is directed at you. It develops sensitivity, response, and how to redirect force. In Tai Chi, Pushing Hands is used to acquaint students with the principles of what are known as the Eight Gates derived from the Pa Kua. They are eight different leverage applications (eight energies) in the arms accompanied, by footwork in a range of motion which proponents say will eventually allow students to defend themselves calmly and competently if attacked. A form expressing each one of these aspects is found in all Tai Chi styles. Pushing Hands is a simplified form of sparring popular with students of Tai Chi. Lacking the punches and kicks common in the practice fighting of many external martial arts, Pushing Hands is a gentle sport of control where success is achieved by upsetting the balance of one's opponent.

**EXERCISE. 44. Pushing Hands**

Begin by facing one another, each in a bow stance. Each participant has his or her outside hand on the elbow of their opponent and the inside hand on the wrist. As the match begins, the pair use their hands to push against one another, seeking to control one another's energy. Sudden or forceful shoving is not allowed. The victor is the pusher of the greatest skill, not the greatest strength. For students of Tai Chi, Pushing Hands provides an

important complement to Forms and Standing Meditation. When performed correctly, the motion of Tai Chi reflects the opposing influences of Yin and Yang. Applying Tai Chi movements against a human opponent teaches this balance in way that can't be learned by other means. Tai Chi teaches the Pushing Hands student to use a minimum of energy, for an excess of energy can be exploited by a skilful opponent. Circular motion is used to divert attacks from the critical centre of the body. The body must be relaxed. If the body is tense or stiff, the centre can be influenced from any point, while if the body is relaxed, energy can easily be dissipated or diverted. Awareness and reaction often triumph over force and aggression.



### **PENG LU JI AN**

Peng, Lu, Ji, and An are the four basic Pushing Hands skills. Sometimes they are called Si Shou – four hands (it is common to call each skill a hand), or Si Zheng – four cardinal directions, from the four basic directions in Pa Kua. There is a practice routine for these four skills in every style of Tai Chi Chuan. People believe it to be a classical form passed down from a very early time through song and dance. Peng, Lu, Ji, and An are the most basic Tai Chi Chuan tactical skills, so here they stand for Tai Chi Chuan skills in general. From practicing Pushing Hands one can understand the essence Tai Chi Chuan.

When you practice these basic Pushing Hands skills, you should focus and pay close attention to every detail of your movements. Do not overlook anything, not matter how small. Try to bring awareness to tiny details. Following is the most important applied skill in Tai Chi Chuan. If you can follow your opponent no matter what he does, you can then truly feel and know everything he wants to do, and then you have a chance to make him miss his target. Do not let him feel your intention or give him any opportunity for attack. Together peng, lu, ji, and an form the basic push hands practice routine, the most common and at the same time the most important applied practice in Tai Chi Chuan. Although the movements themselves are not very complex, correct practice of these skills brings great benefits. Usually people say hard practice of these movements will lead to the beginning of one's understanding of Tai Chi Chuan, so every group pushes their students to practice this routine long and hard. It is said one should do a thousand circles of peng-lu-ji-an push hands per day for three years before learning any other skill.

During practice, you should pay great attention to all of the details. Be especially careful about the application of internal components – shen, yi, qi, and jin with your movements. Usually there are several stages to the practice: First, you should learn to do all movements correctly, before practicing long and hard. You should concentrate on relaxing and making the movements smooth. Maintain constant but light contact with your partner, do not use brute force. Please remember this is not a real fight but practice, where the objective is to acquire basic skills. The emphasis is not on winning or losing, but on using Tai Chi Chuan principles in all your movements. Training this way will help you develop sensitivity and the ability to relax deeply. That in turn will help you develop a true ability to follow. If you can really feel and follow your opponent, he will have a difficult time finding a chance to get you. Then you will have a greater chance to get him. This is a very important concept in Tai Chi Chuan.

According to the Taoist Wuxing principle, when one stands stable and centered, one becomes like the earth. Everything comes from the earth, so the four basic skills are generated. Traditionally, the following attributes are ascribed according to wuxing: Peng in north, its attribute is water; Lu in south, its attribute is fire; Ji in east, its attribute is wood; and An in west, its attribute is metal. In this way the four basic tactics correspond to the primary Pa Kua, where peng is kan; lu is li; ji is zhen; and an is dui. Accordingly, the technical attributes of the skills must follow their corresponding principles.

No matter how strong your opponent is, his powers are wasted if they do not get applied to your body. As soon as he moves, you will have the chance to find his weakness and exploit it. With the right timing and direction, you can manipulate a large weight or force using very little effort on your part. Here four ounces and a thousand pounds refer to the general concept of small versus large force, the exact numbers or ratio does not really matter.

A common mistake for a lot of people is that they focus too much on "using four ounces to overcome a thousand pounds" part. That alone is not sufficient, pay attention to the phrase "lure him to make the first move". Only when a large weight or force gets moving do you get a chance to find the weak point and move it. This is what Tai Chi Chuan skill seeks to accomplish. An even worse case of misunderstanding occurs when people interpret this phrase to mean "use only four ounces to defeat a thousand pounds." That does not make sense and confuses people. In reality, only when you can apply your force at the right time in the right direction can you have a chance to use small force to defeat a large force.

Lure your opponent into committing his forces by offering him a target, and when you move that target and his force misses, that will cause him to lose balance. This is called lure him in and let his force meet emptiness. At this moment, gather all your internal forces to defeat him. When an opponent has already lost his balance, you can throw him very easily. How is this accomplished? It is the result of using the basic Tai Chi Chuan skills. Zhan, nian, lian, and sui are the most basic skills; diu and ding are the most common mistakes. Here the sentence tells us to perform Tai Chi Chuan using zhan, nian, lian, and sui, avoiding diu and ding. Together it means try to do all skills correctly and avoid the mistakes.

Lure the opponent in to fall into emptiness is the main idea of Tai Chi Chuan. In fact we can say no matter what skills we use, this is the ultimate effect we want to achieve. In practice, how to lure your opponent in is the key point. To lure is not to simply move away. It is not a dodge, and it is not running away either. You should let your opponent feel like he can get to you, that he can use his force on you. When his true force comes out, you should keep him going. Little by little, you can lure him to lose his balance. Here the

common misunderstanding is that you are physically moving your body away. True Tai Chi Chuan skill involves keeping in touch with the opponent, but not allowing his force to have any real effect on your body. So most of the time the physical movement itself is very small and brief, so subtle it cannot be seen clearly. The feelings involved in this process are very nuanced. In the beginning, you try to lure his force out, when he starts to lose his balance, the touching point between you and him become a point he wants to use to keep his balance. To keep his balance, he will become more dependent on the point of contact. He will apply more force on it, giving you more opportunity to control him and let him lose even more balance. So it looks like in the beginning you follow him and then he just falls under your control and follow you.

This is one of the high level skills in Tai Chi Chuan. Only when you can do this well can you create the moment that allows you to throw the opponent with the least effort on your part. When you release your force to throw the opponent, no matter how much you use, it should be whole-body force. Whole-body force does not mean using the maximum force you have in your body, it just means the force has to come from all parts of the body. For releasing force or jin, there are two common concepts involved –opening (kai) and closing (he). Opening is about xu – the storing, charging, gathering, and integration of internal force. That means you should give the opponent a chance to come in and try something. That will give you a chance to control him. So “lure him in and off-balance him” is opening. At the same time, you should store your force and prepare to launch it. Closing is about fa – the releasing of internal force. That means releasing your whole-body internal force in the right direction at the right time. It should be noted that in real application, most of the time opening and closing cannot be separated clearly, sometimes they occur simultaneously.

### **SELF DEFENCE BY CHENG TIN HUNG AND D.J. DOCHERTY**

The roots of Tai Chi lay in the Tao philosophy of Yin and Yang, which teaches that hardness can overcome softness, and that softness can overcome hardness. It was originally used by Chinese martial artists as a form of self defence. Let us have a look at this theory in practice: A common occurrence in a fight would be where A attacks B with all his strength and B uses all his strength to block the attack. Here the parties are engaged in a battle of force against force and the stronger side will win.

In another typical situation let us suppose that two men, one weak, the other strong, go to the same martial arts school and learn the same techniques for an equal length of time. In a fight between the two, the stronger will still defeat the weaker.

Wang Chung-yueh, a Tai Chi Chuan master, who lived during the Ming Dynasty, studied this type of situation. After many years of observing various hard styles of the Chinese martial arts, he came to the conclusion that, stylistic differences aside, when used in combat the end result was always the same; victory would go to the swiftest and strongest and not necessarily to those who had made an intensive study of their art.

Chang San-feng had studied the same situation, even before Wang did. Driven by a belief that victory need not inevitably go to the strong, but that brain could defeat brawn, he used his knowledge of Taoism to create a martial art based on the principles of Tai Chi - the changes of Yin and Yang. He called it Tai Chi Chuan, the word Chuan meaning Fist and thus representing martial art.

Correct application of Tai Chi Chuan techniques in combat will result in the situation where a slight application of force is sufficient to deflect, divert, or otherwise render harmless a

force which is many times greater in magnitude. Thus the soft overcomes the hard and the weak need not fear to do battle with the strong. For the purposes of Tai Chi Chuan in combat, softness is the child of wisdom, and is not merely a weak force which can somehow magically defeat a stronger one. The two major principles of Tai Chi Chuan self-defense strategy are using stillness to defeat motion, and using softness to defeat hardness.

### **STILLNESS DEFEATS MOTION**

The practice of this principle requires a clear mind. We should wait for our opponent to begin making the first move then pre-empt him by reacting decisively, before he can complete it. We do this because, when first facing our opponent we do not know his intentions, and so we do not know which part of our body he will attack. It is better, then, to wait until he commits himself to an attack so that we can divert it before it reaches its conclusion, and then we in turn can counter-attack by striking his weak points. We must avoid taking this principle to the absurd conclusion of waiting for our opponent to hit us without moving a muscle in response. That is why in a classical text on the Thirteen Tactics it is written, "If the enemy does not move, we do not move, but as soon as he begins to move we move at once."

In using this principle, our mind must remain clear to enable us to detect our opponent's slightest movements and to counteract any intended attack. The key to this principle is that once our opponent has committed himself to an attack it already too late for him to react to our counteraction. In the words of the military strategist Sun Tzu, "We must know ourselves and our opponent." We can only do this by remaining calm and collected until we clearly detect an impending attack to which we then immediately respond.

### **SOFTNESS OVERCOMES HARDNESS**

In the practice of this principle we must consciously avoid using brute force attempting to counteract the attacks of our opponent. Mind and body must work in harmony in the correct application of the techniques of defense and counter-attack.

The idea is to divert the attacks of our opponent in such a way as to turn his own force against him. This requires the use of one or more of the Eight Powers of Tai Chi Chuan, which are discussed below. Thus, if our opponent tries to punch us in the chest, the use of Lu, a slight diversion to the side, will be enough to divert even his strongest attack and pave the way for our counter-attack. In the Song of Tai Chi Pushing Hands it is written, "A force of four ounces can overcome a force of a thousand pounds."

### **CONSTANT PRACTICE**

Constant practice with a partner over a period of years is necessary to develop the ability to apply this sophisticated concept to self-defense. Even then we still require tuition from a competent instructor. To put this in simple terms, most of us are aware that an ox can be led with a length of string. Let us take the string to represent the four ounces and the ox to represent a thousand pounds. If the string is tied to a ring on the end of the ox's nose it can easily be led, but if it is tied to its hind leg a different result can be anticipated. The value then of a competent instructor is to teach the correct application of softness, or slight force.

The use of hard force has certain clear-cut disadvantages, even for the mighty among us. It requires a greater expenditure of energy, whether used in defense or attack. This affects our breathing and increases our heartbeat which in turn puts a strain on our central nervous system, thus indirectly slowing our actions and reflexes. All this is of course very much to the advantage of our opponent. The use of softness on the other hand requires the expenditure of very little energy; our muscles remain relaxed and supple making our actions swift and sure. It also serves to develop clarity of thought and sensitivity, and to reduce

stress. The net result is that when using this softness in combat against a hard opponent, whether in hand or body contact with him, our body acts as a radar system feeding us information about our opponent's intentions, which his own hardness or tension allows our softness or sensitivity to detect.

The other disadvantage in relying on strength alone is that there is always someone stronger. It should also be recognized that even the strong get old some day.

To further ram home the theory and its practice we have only to look at Western history for our vindication. Perhaps the best example of its use was in the war between Greece and Troy, where for years the Greeks laid siege to Troy and thousands of lives were lost on both sides in a bitter war of attrition. Finally, at the suggestion of Odysseus, the most cunning of their leaders, the Greeks pretended to sail away, leaving behind as a gift a huge wooden horse. The Trojans hauled this horse into their city in triumph, believing the war to be over. Late at night, a party of Greeks, who had hidden inside the horse, broke out, killed the guards and opened the gates for their comrades who had returned and were lying in wait. The Trojans, unprepared and unarmed after a night of celebration, were no match for the Greeks and Troy was put to the sword. This illustrates that the real meaning of softness lies in the use of intelligence rather than brute force.

### ADVANCED PUSH HANDS STRATEGY

Before being able to master the martial art of Tai Chi Chuan in self defence, we must first understand the strategy which governs their use. In the Song of Pushing Hands it is written "a force of only four ounces can overcome a force of one thousand pounds". This approach means that we must rely on skill and intellect rather than brute force; it also requires us to follow a set path of five principles:

1. **ADHERENCE** implies that we must maintain contact with our opponent, remaining sensitive to his every action. Thus we are able to detect his attacks and sense his weak points.
2. **SPONTANEITY** implies that our reactions to any attack should follow the principle that as soon as our opponent moves (attacks) we move (counter) before he can complete his movement. Defense and counter-attack are a series of smooth, unbroken movements .
3. **SOFTNESS** implies that, when applying the principle of adherence, we should maintain only a soft or relaxed contact with our opponent. The sensitivity thus developed enables us to detect any in our opponent's intentions. It is an early warning system. Our also makes it difficult for our opponent to detect our own intentions.
4. **YIELDING** implies that once we have detected the of our opponent's force we must go with it, not against it. This is the key to the Tai Chi Chuan tactic of using "four ounces of force" to divert even the fiercest attack to the void. While our opponent is using all his energy to attack us we are able to conserve.
5. **REJECTION OF BRUTE FORCE** implies that arm contact with our opponent must be both soft and continuous. We must neither withdraw arm nor let it become tense. This constant soft contact enables us to detect change and to make a spontaneous response without unnecessarily wasting energy.



By adopting this Tai Chi Strategy we are able to achieve the ideal of using the minimum effort necessary to produce the maximum effect. To sum up, we must intercept any attack in a relaxed manner, adhering to it while we use only the minimum force necessary to guide it gently away from its original target, and to the void. By doing this we can detect any changes that may occur in the attack and respond to them accordingly. This would be impossible if we used brute force to block the attack. Our actions must be harmonious and continuous.

One of the special characteristics of Tai Chi Chuan is the emphasis placed on diverting attacks and using our opponent's own force against him. This is why we follow the five principles of the Tai Chi Strategy. Adherence is useless without softness as we can only be sensitive to our opponent's changes if we are relaxed. Yielding is useless without adherence as we can only monitor our opponent's movements and know when to counter-attack if we keep contact with him. Brute Force used against our opponent's force will prevent us from detecting weaknesses and this runs against Tai Chi Chuan principles which demand that we know our opponent as well as we know ourselves.

This then is the strategy we must follow when applying the Tai Chi Chuan for self defence. They are practiced when we do the Pushing Hands Exercise which is the first step towards developing our ability to apply, in a practical way, the self defence techniques of Tai Chi Chuan. As stated earlier, self defence and combat are beyond the scope of this book. They have been included here in an attempt to help you understand the origin and historical application of Tai Chi for internal strength and as a martial art. However, these techniques are not just for the quiet solitude of your practice space. They may also be applied with sensitivity to your daily life problems to help you avoid conflict, such as at work, business, relationships, family, and other negative energies that arise that can be transformed into positive ones using this Tai Chi strategy, Tao wisdom, morality, modesty and love.

The sage would not lean forward or backward to accommodate things. This is called tranquillity on disturbance. It is especially in the midst of disturbance that tranquillity becomes perfect.

Chuang Tzu (300 BC)





### THE LEGEND OF TAI CHI

One of the oldest legends tells how Tai Chi was created in China by a Shaolin monk called Chang San-feng who lived about 700 years ago. While walking in the Wudang Mountains, Chang San-feng came across a fight between a snake and a crane. He observed the grace and flow of these creatures. When the snake would strike, the crane would gracefully retreat. When the crane attacked, the snake would recoil. In this contest the principles of yin and yang - softness and yielding became evident. Chang San-feng was so inspired by this event that he created a magical form of self-defence. Other legends say Tai Chi Chuan was originally created at the famous Shaolin Monastery by Bodhidharma (500AD), while others say the Chen family (1600AD), or the Yang family (1850AD) were the original creators.



### MOVING MEDITATION

Warriors originally practised Tai Chi in combination with Chi Kung to reach the highest level of martial arts for combat. However, when Tai Chi is practised, without the intention of being used in combat, but simply for relaxation and vitality, it becomes a dance of energy, known as moving meditation. This is the focus of our practice: Tai Chi Solo Forms, Dance of the Peaceful Warrior. Also known as Hand Forms, it is the ancient Chinese art of harmonising body, breath, mind, chi and spirit, into a continuous sequence of movements to improve health, inner peace and longevity.

The Yin Yang principles found in nature of yielding, balance, softness, suppleness, centeredness and rootedness, are all essential elements of Tai Chi. This contemplation and replication of nature is reflected in the names of many Tai Chi movements. For example: White Crane Spreads Wings, Snake Creeps Down, Golden Pheasant Stands On One leg, Repulse Monkey, Cloud Hands. Each form is practised over and over again until perfected. The ancient masters used to hold each form for 20 slow abdominal breaths in order to fully understand the depth of each energy, trigram and movement. Forms are then linked together with transitions or linking steps to form a recognisable sequence. Each form is integrated into an overall sequence of precise, controlled movements. The number of postures in a form varies widely ranging from 4 steps to a massive 108 steps that take 20 minutes to perform, often containing the same form repeated throughout the sequence.

Each of the Tai Chi moves is an exercise in balance, co-ordination, physical control and regulation of breathing. And sometimes it can be helpful to practice an individual move on its own to explore how it feels. The way a form looks and the speed at which it is performed depends on the Tai Chi style and the frame selected by the performer. For example the move "Wave Hands Like Clouds" - often shortened to "Cloud Hands" - exists in Yang, Chen and Sun styles but in each of the styles the hand positions are slightly different. Cultivating empty and full is one of the most important fundamental concepts that must be firmly grasped before you start to learn the postures and forms. This will ensure that like water, the movement in Tai Chi is effortless. The four phases of Yin Yang reversal are identified not only in Tai Chi but in all movement. \*If you are not cultivating empty and full to generate each movement then you are not doing Tai Chi.

## ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES FOR SOLO FORMS

The following essential guidelines must be clearly understood and integrated throughout your Tai Chi Chuan. During the course of your practice you should always keep them in mind. Always try to understand the principle behind everything you are doing. By referencing your movements with the Pa Kua and I Ching you can begin to understand what you are aiming for. It is the root of your practice and the key to success.

**RELAXATION** Use the mind and not the strength. Avoid using brute force. Harmonize your thoughts and actions by moving in a smooth and relaxed manner. Relax the mind and body and lead from the waist. Energy at the top of the head should be light and sensitive. Relaxation in movement promotes the flow of chi.

**BODY ALIGNMENT** Tai Chi movements are circular with the arms and knees always moving in beautiful circles promoting the flow of chi. Cultivate a horizontal plane of movement to avoid bouncing and losing energy through the top of the head. Keep eyes fixed on the horizon to avoid bouncing. Maintain a centreline with the body turning on a central axis, conserving energy and promoting the flow of chi.

**SLOWNESS** Soft slow practice reduces tension and increases concentration. Be soft and gentle. Seek stillness in movement. The Taoists Masters say "Seek tranquility in motion". This means that the slowness of our physical movements when practicing Tai Chi results in peace of mind which enables us to concentrate on performing the exercise to the exclusion of outside distractions.

**SINKING AND ROOTING** Sink the chest and raise the back. Sink the shoulders and drop the elbows. Root the feet at the Three Nail Points. Sink the chi to the Lower Dan Tien and move from this energy centre (meaning the waist area). Be stable and grounded with a low centre of gravity.

**MAINTAIN MEDITATION** Tai Chi has an attitude of uncovering the stillness within motion, and it is only through meditation that we can realize this. It grounds us, teaches us to centre ourselves both emotionally and physically, shows us how to be in the moment, and builds up tremendous strength from the inside out. It is through meditation that our whole body moves as one, continuously without interruption, filling our movements with relaxation and the flowing, beautiful grace of Tai Chi.

**INTEGRATING BREATH AND MOVEMENT** Initially, it is best not to be too concerned about breathing. First learn the sequence of postures and then incorporate the breathing later. Ultimately, the breathing becomes such an intrinsic part of the exercise that you will not even have to think about it. Unity of the upper and lower body with the breath happens naturally the more you practice.

**CULTIVATE EMPTY AND FULL** Always be aware of Yin and Yang. It is often referred to in the Tai Chi Classics as the substantial and insubstantial, knowing when you and your opponent are full and empty. Feel the changes in weight distribution, notice and act upon the reversal of energy. Avoid double weightedness. Less time and energy is required if you apply the graceful physics of fluid motion.

**MARTIAL INTENT AND PURPOSE** The mind should be just ahead of the movement to guide the chi. Unity of internal and external intent and movement is essential. Intent is the commander of all movement. When the intent is there, the chi is there and the power is there. A movement without intent is nothing. An intent without movement is nothing too. An intent combined with movement that is not applied to an opponent is nothing. A beginner who moves from movement to movement without paying attention to each movement's function is not considered to be practicing tai chi chuan.

**PERSISTENCE IS THE MOTHER OF CHANGE** Constant practice with a partner over a period of years is necessary to develop, the ability to apply the sophisticated concepts to Tai Chi. Even then you still require tuition from an experienced and qualified instructor. The journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath your feet. TAO TE CHING vs. 64.

## HAND FORMS

Now let us take a look at the Solo Forms without weapons known as Hand Forms. The Hand Form is the main focus of this book. It is the most basic, as well as the best known, of the five component parts of Tai Chi Chuan, and is idea for people of all levels and ages to improve health, vitality and inner peace. There are two stages in learning the Hand Form. At first we learn the movements in a step by step, simplified way known as the Square Form. This can be compared to teaching a child to write, in that he will be taught first to form block letters. Only when we have mastered this simple method of doing the form can we move on to learn the more intricate Round Form, which consists of the same techniques as the Square Form, but which is performed in a free and flowing manner. The Round Form is to the Square Form as cursive script is to block letters. The movements of the Hand Form come in a set sequence. Each form has a self-defense application derived from the Pa Kua, and should be applied during Pushing Hands. Slow and gentle practice of the Hand Form with gentle concentration on the movements will result in tranquillity of mind, help relax the body and improve respiration. The five Hand Forms presented in this book are:

- **Tai Chi Walking** (Part the Wild Horse's Mane)
- **Four Core Movements** (Grasp the Bird's Tail)
- **Short Form Yang Style** (8 Forms)
- **Simplified 24 Forms Yang Style** (Beijing 24)
- **Eight Gates** (From the Original Thirteen Postures of Chang San-Feng)

The reason for postures in the martial arts is to facilitate learning. Forms contain fixed postures but in actual practice [in combat] there are no fixed postures. When applied [in combat] they become fluid, while still maintaining their structural characteristics.

Tang Shun-chih, 1507 – 1560

## THE FOUR CORE MOVEMENTS OF TAI CHI

There are four core movements found in every style of Tai Chi throughout China. Although different lineages and families have interpreted them in different ways, they are basically the same, and form the division between Tai Chi Chuan as an internal art, and other martial styles. The four core movements are practised in sequence in the famous Tai Chi Form: Grasp the Bird's Tail. They are; Ward Off, Roll Back, Press, and Push. These four movements are derived from the four cardinal energies; Peng, Lu, Ji An, found in the Pa Kua (Eight Trigrams) which contain the Pa Keng, Eight Powers (Eight Energies). These four cardinal energies are the pillars and foundations of Tai Chi Chuan; similar to the strokes of calligraphy, and are the root of all Tai Chi movement, form and combat. An introduction to these four core movements has been included because of their fundamental importance to the philosophy and practice of Tai Chi. Only by detailed analysis of the four basic methods will the students understand the concepts of this martial art. It is extremely important to learn them from a qualified and experienced Tai Chi instructor, and not from books or videos. For further reading and background information, the best description I have found of these four energies and movements is in 'The Tai Chi Boxing Chronicle' by Kuo Lien-Ying.

All hexagrams assigned to Tai Chi forms were found in the following books:

**Tai Chi Chuan and I Ching** by Da Liu, Strand Book Company, 1975

**Tai Chi According to the I Ching** by Stuart Alve Olson, Inner Traditions International, 2001

## THE FOUR CORE MOVEMENTS OF TAI CHI



### WARD OFF – PENG – HEAVEN

Peng Ching is outward expanding and moving energy. It is a quality of responding to incoming energy by adhering to that energy, maintaining one's own posture, and bouncing the incoming energy back like a large inflated rubber ball. You don't really respond to force with your own muscular force to repel, block, or ward off the attack. Peng is a response of the whole body, the whole posture, unified in one's center, grounded, and capable of gathering and then giving back the opponent's energy. Peng is also considered the fundamental way of delivering energy and embodied in some way in each of the other Eight Gates. When moving, receiving, collecting, and striking, Peng is always used. It is not easy to complete consecutive movements and string them together without flexibility. Peng is Tai Chi's essential energy. The body becomes like a spring; when pressed it recoils immediately. *The Tai Chi Boxing Chronicle - Kuo Lien-Ying*



### ROLL BACK – LU – EARTH

Lu Ching is receiving and collecting energy, or inward receiving energy. The power point of Lu is on both wrists. When applied together with rotation of the waist Lu redirects the momentum of the opponent, leading him astride. The saying from the Tao Te Ching, "Four ounces of force can move thousand pounds" in Tai Chi is actually a reference to Lu. At the point of contact the move should be light, precise, quick, and continuous. With the rotation of the waist the forward momentum of the opponent is unchanged, nonstop, and unbroken. His speed is suddenly exaggerated, and a lack of compensation invariably results in a loss of balance. Lu is the use of force in a sideways direction, such as where we intercept and move with a forward directed attack, simultaneously diverting it slightly to one side and thus to the void. The greater the force of his attack, the greater the resulting loss of balance on the part of our opponent. *Principles of the Thirteen Tactics*



### PRESS – JI – WATER

Ji Ching is pressing and receiving energy. This is an offensive force delivered by following the opponent's energy, by squeezing or sticking forward. Pressing Energy functions in two ways: (1) The simplest is the direct method. Advance to meet (receive) the opponent, and then adhere and close in one action, just like in elbowing. (2) To apply reaction force is the indirect method. This is like a ball bouncing off a wall or a coin tossed onto a drumhead, rebounding off with a ringing sound. The practitioner must then imagine the chi rising up from the Lower Dan Tien into the spine, through the arms and into the wrists and palms. Thus, accordingly, the chi is imagined to have penetrated outwards onto the opponent's body. *Tai Chi According to the I Ching - Stuart Alve Loson*



### PUSH – AN – FIRE

An Ching is downward pushing energy. Pushing power comes from the legs pushing into the earth. Grasping the Bird's Tail, Fair Lady Works the Loom Pushing or pressing with both palms in a downward direction, Peng energy directed downward. For instance: when the two hands form the Push gesture, there is an imagined intent to the front, as if an opponent was really there. At this time, within the palms of the hands there is no chi which can be issued. When applied it is like flowing water. The substantial is concealed in the insubstantial. When the flow is swift it is difficult to resist. Coming to a high place, it swells and fills the place up; meeting a hollow it dives downward. The waves rise and fall, finding a hole they will surely surge in. What is absolutely necessary in the beginning is to follow the imagination. *Song of the Eight Gates - Tan Men-hsien*

### EXERCISE 45. The Four Core Movement of Tai Chi

(Approx 2 minutes)

These four movements contain the foundation of Tai Chi. They can be found in the famous Hand Form known as 'Grasp the Bird's Tail' and are part of the Original Thirteen Postures of Chang San-Feng (14<sup>th</sup> century), and Wang Tsung-yueh (18<sup>th</sup> century) who were among the first to put the Tai Chi forms into a balanced and flowing sequence, or dance. Each of the four core movements are a direct application of the four cardinal energies represented in the Pa Kua; Peng, Lu, Ji, An. Tai Chi is the physical interpretation of the philosophy of Tao. It has Yin and Yang components. Tai Chi is a very efficient and effective martial art because it applies the internal power of Chi Kung, and eight energies of the Pakua to each technique. \* If you are not applying Chi Kung and Pa Keng, then you are not doing Tai Chi.

## THE FOUR CORE MOVEMENTS



WARD OFF



ROLL BACK



PRESS



PUSH



## TAI CHI SHORT FORM YANG STYLE (8 FORMS)

This short form is designed to introduce students to the Simplified 24 Forms, and to practise balance, focus, flexibility and slowness. It is often performed by students with less time available. All forms are practised twice – on the left and right sides. Practise each form individually before performing the whole sequence. More forms can be added such as Single Whip, Snake Creeps down, White Crane Spreads Wings, or Play the Lute, before Cross Hands and Closing. It is highly recommended that these exercises are learned from a qualified and experienced Tai Chi instructor to avoid getting into bad habits or possible injury.

### EXERCISE 46. Tai Chi Short Form Yang Style (8 Forms)

(Approx 4 minutes)



1. Opening



2. Repulse Monkey



3. Brush Knee and Push



4. Part the Wild Horse's Mane



5. Wave Hands Like Clouds



6. Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg



7. High Kick



8. Grasp the Bird's Tail



Cross Hands



Closing

## TAI CHI SHORT FORM YANG STYLE (8 FORMS)



OPENING



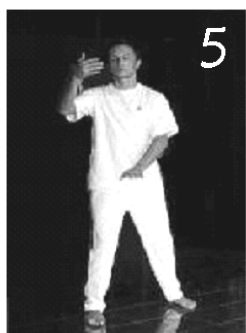
REPULSE MONKEY



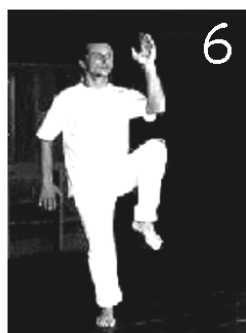
BRUSH KNEE  
AND PUSH



PART THE WILD  
HORSE'S MANE



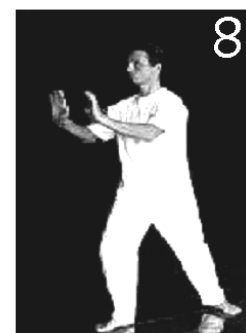
WAVE HANDS  
LIKE CLOUDS



GOLDEN PHEASANT  
STANDS ON ONE LEG



HIGH KICK



GRASP THE BIRD'S TAIL  
[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)

## TAI CHI SIMPLIFIED 24 FORMS YANG STYLE

The most popular Tai Chi exercise is the Yang Style 24 Forms. It was created in 1956 by four Tai Chi masters for the National Physical Culture and Sports Commission of China in order to standardize Tai Chi training for schools, competition and hospitals. The Tai Chi Chuan 24 Forms, also called the Beijing 24, Peking 24, or Simplified 24 Forms, uses 24 martial art moves that contain the important and traditional characteristics and features of the Yang family style 88 and 108 Hand Forms. It can be shortened to 4, 8 or 16 forms, or extended to the Standard 48 forms. Taking about 8 minutes to complete, these 24 forms enable beginners, young and old, to concentrate on, and appreciate, the essential principles of Tai Chi; slow effortless movement, relaxation and awareness of mind and body as one. The Tai Chi 24 Forms is ideal for people who are recovering from injury or illness, or who have not exercised in a long time. Special attention is given to applying these principles of movement to our daily activities, so that the benefits of Tai Chi are taken into everyday life.

### EXERCISE 47. Tai Chi Simplified 24 Forms Yang Style

(Approx 8 minutes)



1. Opening



2. Part the Wild Horse's



3. White Crane Spreads Wings



4. Brush Knee and Push



5. Playing the Lute



6. Repulse Monkey and Retreat



7. Grasp the Bird's Tail (L)



8. Grasp the Bird's Tail (R)



9. Single Whip



10. Wave Hands Like Clouds



11. Single Whip



12. High Pat on Horse



13. High Kick (R)



14. Double Punch to the Ears



15. Turn the Body and High Kick (L)



16. Snake Creeps Down (L)



Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg (L)



17. Snake Creeps Down (R)



Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg (R)



18. Fair Lady Works with Shuttles



19. Pick Up Needle from the Bottom of the Sea



20. Flash the Arms



21. Turn Block Parry and Punch



22. Apparent Closing



23. Cross Hands



24. Closing

# TAI CHI CHUAN SIMPLIFIED 24 FORMS YANG STYLE



1. Opening



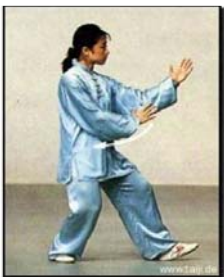
2. Part the Wild Horse's Mane



3. White Crane Spreads Wings



4. Brush Knee and Push



5. Play the Lute



6. Retreat and Repulse Monkey



7. Grasp the Bird's Tail (L)



8. Grasp the Bird's Tail (R)



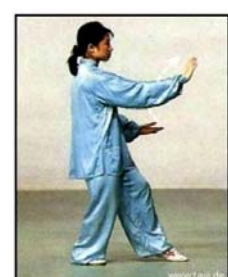
9. Single Whip



10. Wave Hands Like Clouds



11. Single Whip



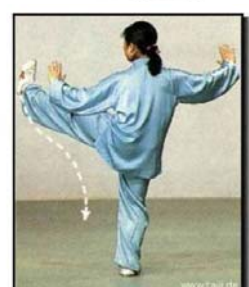
12. High Pat on a Horse



13. High Kick (R)



14. Double Punch to the Ears



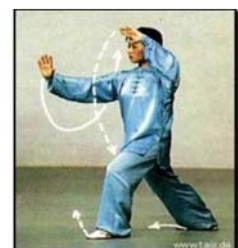
15. High Kick (L)



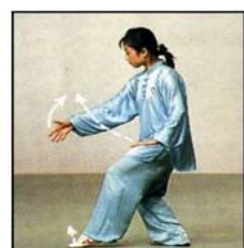
16. Snake Creeps through the Grass (L)  
Golden Pheasant Stand on One Leg (L)



17. Snake Creeps through the Grass (R)  
Golden Pheasant Stand on One Leg (R)



18. Fair Lady Works the Shuttles



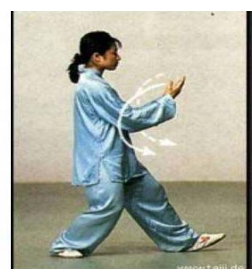
19. Pick Up Needle from  
the Bottom of the Sea



20. Flash the Arms



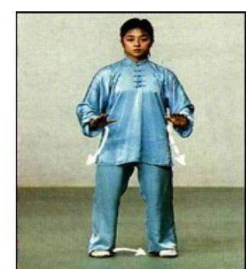
21. Turn Block Parry and Punch



22. Apparent Closing



23. Cross Hands

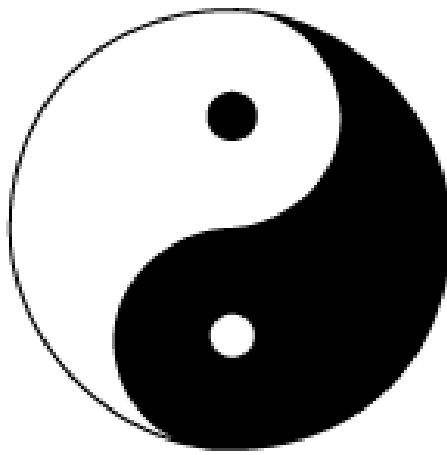


24. Closing

# TAI CHI CHUAN SIMPLIFIED 24 FORMS YANG STYLE

www.taichibali.com

No.	Direction	Form	Martial Intent – Application
1.	N N	<b>OPENING</b> – Wu Chi to Tai Chi Hold chi ball	Stillness to Movement Gather your Chi
2.	W W W	<b>PART THE WILD HORSE'S MANE</b> – left Part the wild horse's mane – right Part the wild horse's mane – left	Block and protect
3.	W	<b>WHITE CRANE SPREADS WINGS</b>	Block and guard
4.	W W W	<b>BRUSH KNEE AND PUSH</b> – right hand Brush knee and push – left hand Brush knee and push – right hand	Block, punch and push
5.	W	<b>PLAYING THE LUTE</b> – left side	Jab to throat Block and break arm
6.	W W W W	<b>RETREAT AND REPULSE MONKEY</b> – right Retreat and repulse monkey – left Retreat and repulse monkey – right Retreat and repulse monkey – left	Retreat and strike many opponents
7.	N W	Hold chi ball <b>GRASP THE BIRD'S TAIL</b> – left	Gather your Chi Shield and block Draw in and strike
8.	N E	Hold chi ball <b>GRASP THE BIRD'S TAIL</b> – right	Gather your Chi Shield and block Draw in and strike
9.	W	<b>SINGLE WHIP</b>	Hook/Jab to weak point
10.	N	<b>WAVE HANDS LIKE CLOUDS</b> –3 times	Block many opponents
11.	W	<b>SINGLE WHIP</b>	Hook/Jab to weak point
12.	W	<b>HIGH PAT ON A HORSE</b>	Double jab to throat and chest
13.	W	<b>HIGH KICK</b> – right	Kick and protect head
14.	W ⇒ NW	<b>DOUBLE PUNCH TO THE EARS</b>	Two handed strike to the head
15.	NW ⇒ E	<b>HIGH KICK</b> – left	Kick and protect head
16.	E	<b>SNAKE CREEPS THROUGH THE GRASS</b> – left <b>GOLDEN PHEASANT STANDS ON ONE LEG</b> – left	Low strike under opponent Jab under chin
17.	E	<b>SNAKE CREEPS THROUGH THE GRASS</b> – right <b>GOLDEN PHEASANT STANDS ON ONE LEG</b> – right	Low strike under opponent Jab under chin
18.	SE ⇒ NE	Hold chi ball <b>FAIR LADY WORKS THE SHUTTLE</b>	Gather your Chi Protect, block and strike
19.	E	<b>PICK UP NEEDLE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA</b>	Jab to chest when opponent is down
20.	E	<b>FLASH THE ARMS</b>	Protect and strike
21.	E ⇒ W	<b>TURN BLOCK PARRY AND PUNCH</b>	Grab, throw and punch www.taichibali.com
22.	W	<b>APPARENT CLOSING</b>	Break shoulder hold and push
23.	N	<b>CROSS HANDS</b>	Break shoulder hold
24.	N	<b>CLOSING</b> – Tai Chi to Wu Chi	Movement to Stillness



## SONG OF THE THIRTEEN POSTURES by Unknown Author

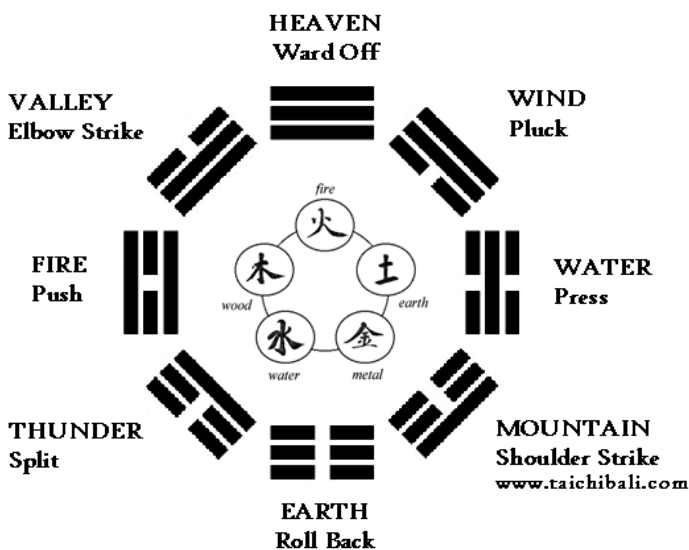
The Thirteen Postures should not be taken lightly;  
the source of the postures is in the waist.  
Be mindful of the interchange between insubstantial and substantial;  
The ch'i circulates throughout the body without hindrance.  
Be still,  
when touched by the opponent,  
be tranquil and move in stillness;  
changes caused by my opponent fill him with wonder.  
Study the function of each posture carefully and with deliberation;  
to achieve the goal is very easy.  
Pay attention to the waist at all times;  
completely relax the abdomen  
and the ch'i rises up.  
When the tailbone is centered and straight,  
the shen [spirit of vitality] goes through to the headtop.  
To make the whole body light and agile suspend the headtop.  
Carefully study.  
Extension and contraction, opening and closing, should be natural.  
To enter the door and be shown the way,  
you must be orally taught.  
Practice should be uninterrupted,  
and technique achieved by self study.  
Speaking of the body and its function, what is the standard?  
The I [mind-intent] and ch'i are king,  
and the bones and muscles are the court.  
Think over carefully what the final purpose is:  
to lengthen life and maintain youth.  
The Song consists of 140 characters;  
each character is true and the meaning is complete.  
If you do not study in this manner,  
then you will waste your time and sigh with regret.

## THE ORIGINAL THIRTEEN POSTURES

Ward Off, Roll Back, Press, and Push are called the four cardinal directions. Pull Down, Split, Elbow Strike and Shoulder Strike are called the four diagonals. Forward, backward, to the left side, to the right side, and center are called metal, wood, water, fire and earth, respectively. When combined, these forms are called the thirteen original styles of Tai Chi Chuan.

Master Chang San-feng

The ancient name for Tai Chi Chuan was the Original Thirteen Postures. This referred to the Five Steps and the Eight Gates. Traditionally the Five Steps have been associated with the Five Elements while the Eight Gates, or Eight Powers, have been associated with the Pa Kua or Eight Trigrams. The Original Thirteen Postures cover the essential concepts and movements found throughout the many styles of Tai Chi Chuan. The most frequent references to the Original Thirteen Postures are in the writings and teachings of the Yang Style of Tai Chi Chuan. These postures; the Eight Gates and the Five Steps, are also referred to in various ways by Tai Chi Chuan Masters. Some call them the Thirteen Powers, others call them the Thirteen Entrances, Thirteen Movements, or Thirteen Energies.



### THE EIGHT GATES

Ward Off – Heaven

Roll Back – Earth

Press – Water

Push – Fire

Shoulder Strike – Mountain

Elbow Strike – Valley

Split – Thunder

Pluck – Wind

### THE FIVE STEPS

Advancing Steps – Metal

Retreating Steps – Wood

Stepping to the Left Side – Water

Stepping to the Right Side – Fire

Settling at the Center – Earth

The first eight of the Original Thirteen Postures are derived from the Pa Kua, the eight basic trigrams used in the Chinese classic; I Ching - Book of Changes. Known as the Eight Gates, they represent the Pa Keng, or Eight Powers; Heaven, Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, Thunder, Lake, and Mountain. For general health purposes this book advises a meditative sequence of the Eight Gates in a 30 minute solo form, and involves complete intent and understanding of the Pa Keng in movement, energy and chi flow. All thirteen postures involve movement of the lower body, but the Five Steps involve more extensive movements of the feet and legs, and are generally used only in combat. These are referred to as the Five Elemental Phases of Change, and are associated with the five elementary processes involving: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. All genuine martial arts contain some method of applying force. This method may be hard or soft in nature and may be applied in attack and defense. It is called “technique”. Because of the intricate relationship between Tai Chi Chuan and Taoist theory the student of Tai Chi Chuan must not only train technique, but, before he can apply technique properly, he must also understand the underlying theory which governs its use. The Tai Chi Chuan method of applying force is called Pa Keng, which can be roughly translated as Eight Powers, or Eight Energies. Just as from the Pa Kua (Eight Trigrams) we are able to derive the sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching, so from the basic Eight Powers, by applying them in different ways, in different directions, we can produce all the fighting techniques of Tai Chi Chuan. Just as the sixty-four hexagrams can, by mathematical process, produce further diagrams, so



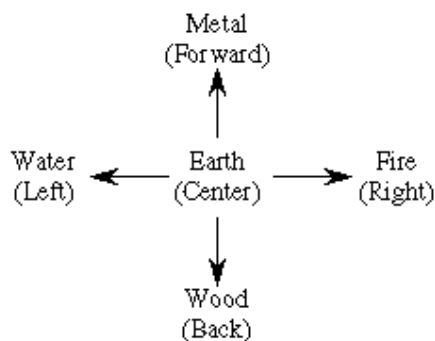
our Eight Powers, if used imaginatively, can produce an indefinite number of fighting techniques. In effect, each of us is a three-dimensional Tai Chi, containing both Yin and Yang, which for present purposes we will take to mean defense and attack.

### THE FIVE STEPS

The Five Steps, or Five Directions, have traditionally been explained by way of the Five Elements. In Tai Chi theory before there was Tai Chi there was Wu Chi (literally “No Chi”). Wu Chi gave rise to Tai Chi which in turn gave rise to Yin and Yang. In Chinese philosophy the interaction and continuous changes of Yin and Yang as well as producing the Eight Trigrams of the Pa Kua and the sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching, also produced the Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth, which in their turn were considered responsible for the formation of all matter in the World. The Five Elements were held to interact thus:

**METAL** gives birth to Water - Metal destroys Wood  
**WOOD** gives birth to Fire - Wood destroys Earth  
**WATER** gives birth to Wood - Water destroys Fire  
**FIRE** gives birth to Earth - Fire destroys Metal  
**EARTH** gives birth to Metal - Earth destroys Water

Each element is stronger than the element which gave birth to it. Thus, as Metal gives birth to Water, Water is stronger than Metal. When any element is opposed by another quantity of the same element, the stronger quantity will win. To sum up, any element is stronger than two of the other four elements, and weaker than the remaining two. The interaction between the elements is eternal and continuous. Each element also has Yin and Yang characteristics. Thus Metal could be sharp and shiny or rusty and dull, while Water could be a roaring waterfall or a muddy pool. Let us take each of the elements to represent one of the Five Steps:



**METAL** represents Forward

**WOOD** represents Back

**WATER** represents Left

**FIRE** represents Right

**EARTH** represents Center

If our opponent uses Metal (moves Forward) our response must follow the theory of the Five Elements. In other words we must use Water (move Left) or Fire (move Right) to destroy his Metal. If instead we use Metal (move Forward) also, then the stronger Metal will win, but this is contrary to Tai Chi Chuan principles. If we remain rooted to the Earth (Center) Element we will be overcome by the advancing Metal. If we make use of Wood (move Back) the Metal will thrust forward in pursuit and cut us down when there is no more room to run. The Five Elements teach us which are the most advantageous and least advantageous of the Five Steps in any given situation. We do not need actually to step forward, back, or to the side when moving from the center, a slight shift of weight in the appropriate direction will normally suffice. These directions refer to the direction in which our body is moving at any one time and we apply the Eight Powers in conjunction with such movements. This gives us a wide variety of possible actions and responses.

**PA KENG – EIGHT POWERS**  
**BY CHENG TIN HUNG AND D.J. DOCHERTY**



**PENG – WARD OFF** is the use of force in an upward direction such as when our opponent thrusts forward and diagonally upward and we respond by tracing the direction of his attack, and using our hands in a smooth and circular movement to divert it even further upward and forward, causing him to lose his balance.



**LU – ROLL BACK** is the use of force in a sideways direction, such as where we intercept and move with a forward directed attack, simultaneously diverting it slightly to one side and thus to the void. The greater the force of his attack, the greater the resulting loss of balance on the part of our opponent.



**JI – PRESS** is a forward directed thrust such as a well-directed push when our opponent is off balance. This is an offensive force delivered by following the opponent's energy, by squeezing or sticking forward.



**AN – PUSH** is where our opponent loses control of his center of gravity, and we use a technique to disrupt his balance to such an extent that he is uprooted completely from his position. It is like a strategically placed lever lifting a heavy rock.



**KAO – SHOULDER STRIKE** is the use of the torso to divert our opponent's attack or to strike him when at close quarters, such as when he attempts to divert our punch to the void, and in reply we continue our forward momentum using the shoulder to strike him.



**CHOU – ELBOW STRIKE** is the use of the elbow or knee joint to divert our opponent's attack and make him lose his balance or to strike his weak points.



**TSAI – PLUCK** is where we direct force downwards such as pressing down on our opponent with our hands as he loses balance in a forward direction.

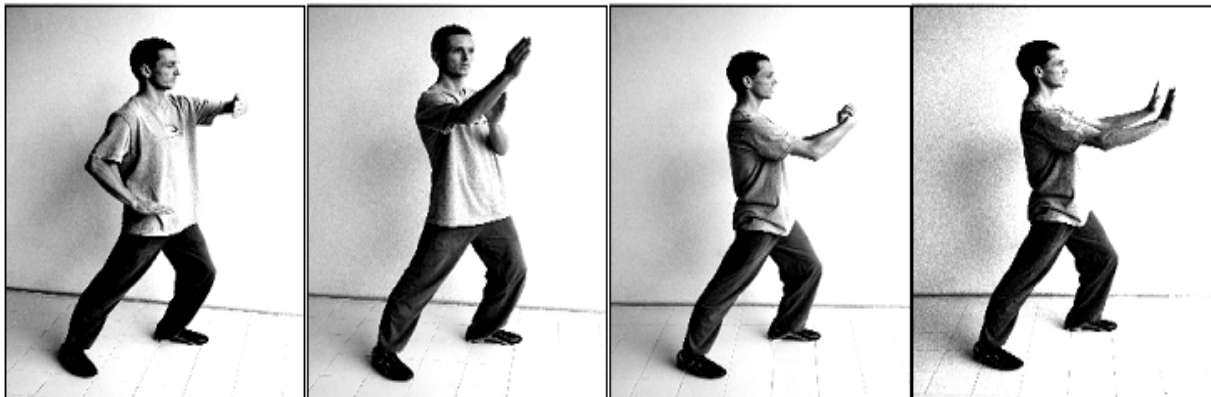


**LIEH – SPLIT** is where we use force in the form of a circular diversion which, as it passes the halfway point starts to move back in the direction of our opponent spiraling the force of his own attack back to him.

From Yin and Yang, the theory tells us, come Sei Jeung, which are Greater Yin, Lesser Yang, Lesser Yin and Greater Yang. These tell us that although there can be both pure attack and pure defense, attack can also contain elements of defense and likewise defense can contain elements of attack. When we attack or defend we use a method of applying power called technique. When this technique is one governed by Tai Chi theory we are using one or more of the Pa Keng or Eight Powers. These powers when applied should result in a circular application of defense and counter-attack. They also contain elements of one another. These powers must be applied flexibly depending on the circumstances that arise. Other so-called "powers" are in fact derived from these Eight Powers. Though the Pa Keng are normally thought of as hand and arm techniques, their use can equally be adapted to foot and leg techniques. Relating the Pa Kua to the use of the Pa Keng we can imagine ourselves standing in the center of the circle made by the Trigrams. When our opponent launches an attack from the direction of any one Trigram, we use one of the Pa Keng to divert its force in the direction of another Trigram. In order to be able to use these Original Thirteen Postures effectively knowledge of the theory is insufficient. Constant practice of the Pushing Hands is essential before we can freely and fluently apply them. Although we have no record of how or why Wang Tsung-yueh set out the relationship in this way, it is important to know the nature and energy of each Trigram in order to fully understand the meditation and movement that drives each Form.



## THE EIGHT GATES OF TAI CHI CHUAN



WARD OFF



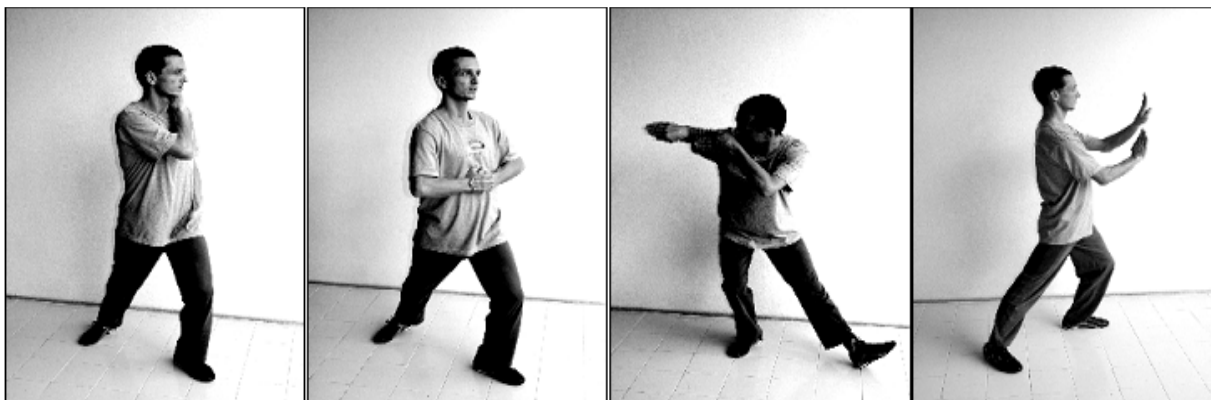
ROLL BACK



PRESS



PUSH



SHOULDER STRIKE



ELBOW STRIKE



SPLIT



PLUCK

[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)

THE EIGHT GATES www.taichibali.com		
Direction	Form	Martial Intent – Application
N	WU CHI	Stillness
N	OPENING	Wuji to Tai Chi – Stillness to Movement Merging Heaven and Earth
W	CHI BALL	Gather your Chi
Four rounds in a clockwise direction with Shoulder Strike		
N	WARD OFF	Shield and protect Channel down like pyramid with upward force
N	ROLL BACK	Receiving, soft and empty Sideways force
N	PRESS	Opponent draws the bow which builds tension in lower back to strike with forward force
N	PUSH	Draw the bow which builds tension to strike under rib cage - downward receiving and upward force
NW⇒NE	SHOULDER STRIKE	Uncoiling of a spring to make a blunt strike Redirecting spinning force
W⇒E	SPLIT	Horizontal turning of wheel to make deflection Spiraling force
E (repeat from Ward Off)	PLUCK	Vertical turning of wheel to use as leverage Downward force
Four rounds in an anti-clockwise direction with Elbow Strike		
N	WARD OFF	Shield and protect Channel down like pyramid with upward force
N	ROLL BACK	Receiving, soft and empty Redirecting sideways force
N	PRESS	Opponent draws the bow which builds tension in lower back to strike with forward force
N	PUSH	Draw the bow which builds tension to strike under rib cage - downward receiving and upward force
NE⇒NW	ELBOW STRIKE	Uncoiling of a spring to make a sharp strike Redirecting spinning force
E⇒W	SPLIT	Horizontal turning of wheel to make deflection Spiraling force
W (repeat from Ward Off)	PLUCK	Vertical turning of wheel to use as leverage Downward force
Finish facing north and closing sequence		
N	WARD OFF	Shield and protect Channel down like pyramid
N	ROLL BACK	Receiving, soft, empty
N	PRESS	Opponent draws the bow which Build tension in lower back to strike
N	PUSH	Draw the bow which builds tension to strike under rib cage
N	CLOSING	Great Tai Chi Circle Offering and receiving
N	WU CHI	Tai Chi to Wuji – Movement to Stillness

#### EXERCISE 48. Eight Gates of Tai Chi Chuan

(Approx 30 minutes)

Also known as the Essential Postures of Tai Chi, this solo form contains the very essence of Tao, Pa Kua, Pa Keng, and unifies the fundamental philosophy of all Tai Chi styles. The Eight Gates sequence is the most revered and advanced Tai Chi technique in this book. It may take many years to master and fully realise the many levels of energy and application of movements beyond the simple explanation and guidance in this book. You are advised to practise each posture separately, before linking them together in this 30 minute sequence.

## SONGS OF THE EIGHT GATES

Attributed to T'an Meng-hsien

### The Song of Peng (Ward Off)

What is the meaning of Peng energy?  
It is like the water supporting a moving boat.  
First sink the ch'i to the tan-t'ien,  
then hold the head as if suspended from above.  
The entire body is filled with springlike energy,  
opening and closing in a very quick moment.  
Even if the opponent uses a thousand pounds of force,  
he can be uprooted and made to float without difficulty.

### The Song of Lu (Roll Back)

What is the meaning of Lu energy?  
Entice the opponent toward you by allowing him to advance,  
lightly and nimbly follow his incoming force  
without disconnecting and without resisting.  
When his force reaches its farthest extent,  
it will naturally become empty.  
The opponent can then be let go or countered at will.  
Maintain your central equilibrium  
and your opponent cannot gain an advantage.

### The Song of Ji (Press)

What is the meaning of Chi energy?  
There are two aspects to its functional use:  
The direct way is to go to meet the opponent  
and attach gently in one movement.  
The indirect way is to use the reaction force  
like the rebound of a ball bouncing off a wall, or  
a coin thrown on a drumhead,  
bouncing off with a ringing sound.

### The Song of An (Push)

What is the meaning of An energy?  
When applied it is like flowing water.  
The substantial is concealed in the insubstantial.  
When the flow is swift it is difficult to resist.  
Coming to a high place, it swells and fills the place up;  
meeting a hollow it dives downward.  
The waves rise and fall,  
finding a hole they will surely surge in.

### The Song of Kao (Shoulder Strike)

What is the meaning of K'ao energy?  
Its method is divided into the shoulder and back technique.  
In Diagonal Flying Posture use shoulder,  
but within the shoulder technique  
there is also some use of the back.  
Once you have the opportunity and can take advantage of the posture,  
the technique explodes like pounding a pestle.  
Carefully maintain your own center.  
Those who lose it will have no achievement.

### **The Song of Chou (Elbow Strike)**

What is the meaning of Chou energy?  
Its method relates to the Five Elements.  
Yin and Yang are divided above and below.  
Insubstantiality and substantiality must be clearly distinguished.  
Joined in unbroken continuity,  
the opponent cannot resist the posture.  
Its explosive pounding is especially fearsome.  
When one has mastered the six kinds of energy,  
the applications become unlimited.

### **The Song of Lieh (Split)**

What is the meaning of Lieh energy?  
It revolves like a spinning disc.  
If something is thrown onto it,  
it will immediately be cast more than ten feet away.  
Have you not seen a whirlpool form in a swift flowing stream?  
The waves roll in spiraling currents.  
If a falling leaf drops into it,  
it will suddenly sink from sight.

### **The Song of Tsai (Pluck)**

What is the meaning of Ts'ai energy?  
It is like the weight attached to the beam of a balance scale.  
Give free play to the opponent's force  
no matter how heavy or light,  
you will know how heavy or light it is after weighing it.  
To push or pull requires only four ounces,  
one thousand pounds can also be balanced.  
If you ask what the principle is,  
the answer is the function of the lever.

## **MARTIAL ARTS**

Tai Chi Chuan is the physical interpretation of the philosophy of Tao. It has Yin and Yang components. Tai Chi Chuan is a martial art and very efficient as such because it applies internal power to each technique. Therefore, when one is practicing Tai Chi Chuan, one is practicing the development of internal power or what is commonly called Chi Kung. It is a special kind of Chi Kung that utilizes all movements for martial art. The skill and power of this Chi Kung is different from most Chi Kung that people practice today. This is why the practice of Tai Chi Chuan yields so many benefits. It has benefits from both martial art and Chi Kung.

Intent is what's necessary. It is the commander of all movement. It is said in the Six Harmony Theory that when the intent is there, the chi is there and the power is there. A movement without intent is nothing. An intent without movement is nothing too. An intent combined with movement that is not applied to an opponent is nothing. When intent combined with movement is applied on an opponent, then something is achieved. A beginner who moves from movement to movement without paying attention to each movement's function is not considered to be practicing Tai Chi Chuan. The fact is that, when one practices Tai Chi Chuan solo form with intent and power, the speed will be slow. Tai Chi Chuan does not mean slow, however, since other martial arts also have slow forms. Tai Chi Chuan can be practised fast. When one is practicing Tai Chi Chuan slow, one focuses on the Yin component. When one practices Tai Chi Chuan fast, one focuses on the Yang component. The Tai Chi Chuan classics said that a practitioner can master the art of Tai Chi Chuan only when one has mastered both Yin and Yang.



Learning Tai Chi is a step by step process which must be followed in order to achieve the desired results. There are many mistakes that a student can make that will cause them to leave the correct path. While the mistakes are numerous, they all have one thing in common; the use of uncontrolled brute force instead of a relaxed, effortless power. Brute force is fine for those naturally endowed with size and strength. But what about someone who is small and not very strong? Is the smaller and weaker doomed to defeat at the hands of someone who is bigger and stronger? No! Tai Chi Boxing was developed for the express purpose of allowing the smaller and weaker to prevail in any confrontation, regardless of the size and strength of the opponent. The Chinese made a distinction between two different ways a human being is able to generate force. One type of force is called Li. A punch using Li is accomplished by suddenly tensing the muscles of the arms and upper torso. This is the more familiar type of power to most people in the modern West. You can easily see the tension and effort, as evidenced by the stiff, bulging muscles of the person throwing such a punch. It tends to be dull, unfocused and relatively slow. The idea behind training with this type of power is to become bigger and stronger than your opponent. For someone who is naturally big and strong, this type of power, though inferior, may be satisfactory. However, should that same person engage with someone who is even bigger and stronger, their chances of prevailing will be greatly diminished. And keep in mind, there will always be someone bigger and stronger.

The other type of force is called jing. Jing is a very powerful force that is generated by a coordinated use of the entire body instead of a few isolated muscle groups. Softness and relaxation replace hardness and tension. Instead of meeting force with force, jing causes the body to naturally compress and then sharply rebound in the same way a spring naturally and effortlessly rebounds after it is compressed. The rebound occurs after the incoming force has spent all its energy, at the extreme reach of a punch or kick for example. That is when your opponent is most vulnerable to the rebounding energy of Jing. Unlike Li, Jing is a pulse of energy that is sharp, quick and has the ability to penetrate very deep. What really makes Jing superior to Li is the fact that it does not depend on size or muscle strength. Anyone, with proper training, is able to generate tremendous power with Jing. Tai Chi martial arts favour Jing over Li.

In practice the postures are indeed fixed so as to have a common ground from which to study principles of Tai Chi movement. However fighting necessitates the abandonment of fixed forms and postures. The postures are subordinate to the principles. When the principles are understood, the postures lose significance.

Lien-ping Shih-chi, 1240 – 1299 A.D.

### **TAI CHI CHUAN BY J.B.HARTLEY**

There is much discussion today in relation to the relevance of the martial aspect of Tai Chi Chuan. Whether through observation or dream, Chang San-feng developed the art. Arising from the interaction between a crane and snake and through nature, observed in action, the effectiveness of Taoist philosophy applied in self-defense. Or whether one chooses other evolutionary approaches in the development of Tai Chi Chuan (Supreme Ultimate Fist), its framework remains the same, that of a martial art. What has perhaps changed is that today the health aspects, rightly so, are given high prominence by some, but, can we argue that the martial art and philosophical objectives of Tai Chi Chuan are not needed, or in fact that they are indeed separate from the health objectives?

Today I would suggest that there are a number of teachers, who either do not know, or choose not to teach, or do not focus on the holistic approach to the art, which encompasses the health and martial aspects. When encompassing the health and martial aspect practice in accordance with the principles is essential, but many say that the times have changed and we need to adapt. Indeed it has, and yes we do, however we need be mindful that the constancy of the heavens remain.

The gaining and attainment of health and related aspects through the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, is in fact the first step on a long and ongoing learning process. My intention in presenting this article is to create interest and discussion within the T.C.A.A in relation to the health and martial aspect of Tai Chi Chuan, of which both are inter-related, connected and dependent. Aware that at the end of the day we practice a somewhat subjective art and need to come to our own conclusions. I put this out for suggestion and am very much aware this writing is essentially an intellectual rambling such theorizing in former times would have been addressed quite expediently, I ask those of skill to put aside my shortcomings, and to assist me in addressing them.

In beginning with the observations of past Masters, we find in Chapter Six of Professor Cheng Man Ching and R W Smith's book, Tai Chi the Supreme Ultimate Exercise for Health, Sport and Self-defense, the following lines:

The student should not forget that Tai chi Chuan is closely related to the fighting tradition of Shao-lin Temple Boxing, and that every movement has its logic in a practical, combative use. Hence the surest test of efficacy of any of the many systems of Tai Chi Chuan practiced today is simply to examine the postures from the standpoint of use. If they cannot be related to practical application, the system is clearly incorrect.

And further adds:

How does Tai Chi Chuan cope with striking, kicking and grappling assaults done, not in sport but in earnest? Tai Chi Chuan's answer is that the principles underlying the solo exercise and the pushing hands practice, especially that of interpreting strength, have an equal, if indeed a greater validity in terms of self defense.

Professor Cheng Man-ching in his song of Form and Function writes:

Form and Function are mutually connected and nothing more.

The illustrious Master Yang Cheng-fu, in his book the practical application of Tai Chi Chuan translated by Douglas Wile it is written:

In Tai Chi Chuan, the ability to cultivate oneself physically and spiritually, but not defend oneself, is civil accomplishment. The ability to defend oneself but not to cultivate oneself, is martial accomplishment. The soft Tai Chi Chuan method is the true Tai Chi Chuan method. The ability to teach the art of self cultivation and self- defense, both cultivation and application, is complete civil and martial Tai Chi Chuan.

From experience the martial application of Tai Chi Chuan for some of us, takes time to acquire. Functional concepts such as yielding and non contention being at opposite ends of the get in first, brute strength and aggressiveness often displayed in physical confrontations and if not in actual physical confrontation the assumed underlying threat of it in managing our day to day affairs. Applying Taoist theories which spring from nature, of yielding and the re-direction of energy, non-opposition and non contention into every day life, can at times, be testing. The classics and both past and present Masters in their guidance relay to us, it is an essential part of the art. One half of the whole if you like, to gain potentially at least, the full benefit of the art one should not overlook this martial aspect, least we be lead astray.

Having stated this we learn the art to avoid rather than hurt, one's ability comes to fruition when we arrive at avoiding or diverting danger altogether without recourse to violence, to learn Tai Chi Chuan effectively for self-defense purposes as written previously can take time to acquire.

We hear or read all the time of balance, central equilibrium of yielding, relaxation, etc. In learning Tai Chi Chuan, I suggest they are not simply static theories isolated to thought alone and the solo forms. But through the practice of push hands, and martial application, we begin to see and more importantly to feel where we are in fact off balance and what we need to do to restore that balance. How to receive and re-direct energy at a very fundamental level, which the principles play

a central role, "the hub of a wheel", so to speak. With ongoing self correction and alignment in accordance with the principles, we in fact become sensitized to the finer elements of Tai Chi Chuan theory and philosophy, "theory and action become one."

We hear also, in Tai Chi Chuan, of the importance of a calm mind and relaxed body. In push hands we practice these fundamentals under what can be stressful but controlled situations. Addressing ones fear and sensitivity, the uniting of both principle and practice can only assist in bettering ones overall health and understanding of Tai Chi Chuan. What good is theory if it remains contained only in thought and cannot be expressed physically? Or when we find ourselves in a potentially stressful life situation and we cannot avoid, divert or re-direct that energy? What good is practicing Tai Chi Chuan for health without regard to it's underlying principles only to find our knees have been worn away or there are constant aches in the lower back, hips and chest? Can it be said to be an exercise of the supreme ultimate? Again "thought alone is without profit"

Taoist Masters were/are pragmatic peoples, so Tai Chi Chuan indeed has a functional side. That is the theory needs to have its physical representation, be it for health or martial art. A calm mind and its external expression, a relaxed body, I feel are pre-requisites in addressing self defense situations and health ailments. Hopefully I am making the connection reasonably clear in that the principles are in fact multi-functional and we need to take care when addressing the parts or components of Tai Chi Chuan in isolation from the other. We also need to make sure that we do not address those elements of Tai Chi Chuan in a way, which serves only to dilute the fundamental principles of Tai Chi Chuan.

The priority of Tai Chi Chuan and its place in today's society may very well be it's health benefits,(which is consistent with the desire of Chang San-feng) given the fast pace of our society and the many lifestyle dis-eases we may encounter. Self defense is also conducive to overall well being and should not be seen as separate from, I feel without argument, Tai Chi Chuan is indeed an art for all seasons, philosophically it is born of Wu-Chi and is without limit

From a personal perspective the promotion of the principles of Tai Chi Chuan can assist one in becoming more tolerant, this must be of benefit to ones community. Without ones health we have nothing. What good is the martial art without health? But to say Tai Chi Chuan is "only" for health or "only" for martial art, I feel can be misleading. If we practice our art, heeding its principles, "with appropriate guidance"; we are generally practicing correctly. The role of a teacher is to explain and lead us via example as to the best way of incorporating and applying the principles in ones daily practice, and prepare one for the physical transmission of the art.

To say Tai Chi Chuan is an art "only" for health or martial art is to say the principles have changed. Philosophically principles are the constant within change. There have been evolutionary changes in the manifestation of form but not the fundamental principles of which Tai Chi Chuan is born. If they had changed then what we practice today would be completely without basis, and lost to us long ago. Be that for health or martial art, the difference comes in the application of those principles, or the physical expression of such, and one's knowledge and understanding in relation to them. To move away from the fundamental principles and framework of Tai Chi Chuan I would suggest, in fact, weakens and not strengthens its expression.

If we practice Tai Chi Chuan without recourse to the principles it can in fact lead to ill health, not just externally such as sore knees, aching hips etc but also internally in the organs, and in the corruption of one's chi.

Whilst there are a number of variables as to why as individuals we may choose to learn Tai Chi Chuan such as; health status, age, level of interest be it philosophy, spirituality, martial art, relaxation, sheer enjoyment mental or physical stimulation, meditation etc. As students we need practice consistently in accordance with the classics as best one can, or I would suggest, we do, not only ourselves, but future practitioners a dis-service and assist perhaps inadvertently in the arts long term disintegration.

Principle governs Structure, Structure governs Form, Form governs Function, be that for health or martial art neither being mutually exclusive, the fundamentals remain the same. The functional aspect of Tai Chi Chuan lies in internal principles expressed externally. Proper body alignment, relaxation and movement are equally important to health as it is to martial art. The practice of the solo form expresses an inner consciousness or awareness in relation to our understanding of the principles underpinning Tai Chi Chuan. The solo form is not just for looks, or to aimlessly wave ones arms about, be sure that Tai Chi Chuan is about life long learning, there is purpose and intent in its movement.

My intention is not to express that people cannot do the art simply to improve ones health or to enjoy it's movement or artistic expression, but simply to encourage others to explore the many aspects of Tai Chi Chuan, which without doubt encompasses it's martial expression. To close off this door I feel, is to close one off to a very interesting, vital learning and growing process that is the art of Tai Chi Chuan.

The Eight Trigrams and Five Elements are a part of man's natural endowment. We must first understand the basis of work: conscious movement. Only after grasping conscious movement are we able to interpret energy, and only after interpreting energy can we reach the level of spiritual insight. Thus the first stage of our work is understanding conscious movement, which although it is a natural endowment is extremely difficult for us to acquire.

Yang Cheng-Fu, 1883-1936 A.D

#### **GENERAL CAUTION**

**Consult a medical doctor before starting this exercise programme.**

**Always remember to exercise in moderation and according to your own capabilities.**





**Level 1      OPENING THE GATES**

Tao Philosophy - The Seven Principles of Tai Chi  
 Tai Chi Warm-ups - Opening the Gates  
 Chi Kung - Centering at the Lower Dan Tien  
 Chi Kung - Oneness with Nature Meditation  
 Chi Kung - Energy Cleansing with Trees  
 Tai Chi - Standing Meditation - Rooting the Three Nail Points  
 Tai Chi - The Four Core Movements

**Level 2      GATHERING THE CHI**

Tao Philosophy - Tao Te Ching  
 Tai Chi Warm-ups - Body Alignment - Maintaining a Centerline  
 Chi Kung - Gathering the Chi - Lower Dan Tien Meditation  
 Chi Kung - 6 Healing Sounds & Inner Smile Meditation  
 Chi Kung - Ba Duan Jin - Eight Pieces of Brocade  
 Tai Chi - Mindful Walking  
 Tai Chi - Short Form Yang Style (8 Forms)

**Level 3      MOVING MEDITATION**

Tao Philosophy - I Ching  
 Tai Chi Warm-ups - Opening the Gates - Rooting and Sinking  
 Chi Kung - Gathering the Chi - Lower Dan Tien Meditation  
 Chi Kung - Opening the Heart - Loving-Kindness Meditation  
 Tai Chi - Tai Chi Walking (3 Forms)  
 Tai Chi - Simplified 24 Forms Yang Style

**Level 4      INNER STRUCTURE OF TAI CHI**

Tao Philosophy – Pa Kua  
 Tai Chi Warm-ups - Opening the Gates - Tai Chi Breathing  
 Chi Kung - Gathering the Chi - Lower Dan Tien Meditation  
 Chi Kung - Wu Qi Xi - Five Animal Exercise  
 Chi Kung - Microcosmic Orbit Meditation  
 Tai Chi - Pushing Hands – Peng Lu Ji An  
 Tai Chi – The Eight Gates (Original 13 Postures of Chang San-Feng)

The Tai Chi for Health training programme offered in this book guides the peaceful warrior to develop unity and modesty, civilization and manners, and cultivates moral character. It includes Chi Kung, and effective daily fitness plans for all ages designed to improve your health, increase your energy, speed up your recovery from illness, and ultimately shine light on the path to spiritual evolution and the Tao. Within our personality is a wide array of demons to be conquered. The ultimate opponent is therefore our own self; healing emotional and mental blockages that prevent us from living in harmony with Tao. The ultimate goal of the peaceful warrior is to strive to reach our highest potential as a human being in all things, overcoming weakness and faults, and attain enlightenment through daily mindfulness, with love wisdom and compassion. It cannot be learned from a book or DVD. Only through your own practice, your life adventures, experiences, and decisions, can we acquire the tools and inner strength to fight our demons alone, on the battlefield of the heart and mind.

## SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

### 1. LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Contemplation and appreciation of the natural world.

### 2. OPENING THE HEART

Cultivating loving kindness and awakening the compassionate spirit.

### 3. CHI – ENERGY OF LIFE

Gathering the chi using meditation, exercise, breath, diet and positive thinking.

### 4. YIN YANG THEORY

Distinguishing between fullness, emptiness, change and reversal, to create harmony and balance.

### 5. RELAXING THE MIND, BREATH AND BODY

Total mind-body-breath concentration, relaxation and unity to increase chi flow through the meridians.

### 6. CENTRED AND GROUNDED

Moving from our centre with feet firmly rooted into the ground, and low centre of gravity.

### 7. SOLO FORMS

Effortless movement through inner structural harmony with the forces of Heaven and Earth.

These Seven Principles distinguish Tai Chi as the highest system of health and internal martial arts practised in China today. Cultivating these principles guides the peaceful warrior to awakening the compassionate spirit inside. They are the keys to health, inner peace and happiness, and the essence of spiritual progress. These principles can only be understood through intuitive transformation, and incorporating Yin Yang and Chi theory into daily life. By removing the obstacles clouding our consciousness we once again connect to our original insight. This allows us to see clearly and understand the workings and wonders of the cosmos. This requires mental, physical and spiritual training and adjustment, which can only be achieved through regular practise under the guidance of an experienced master.

## ECO - MORALITY CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

The following guidelines should be incorporated into daily life, and is a requirement for all students attending TAI CHI BALI classes and Mountain Retreats:

- ❖ To protect and preserve the natural world at all times
- ❖ To promote life of all plants, trees, insects, birds, fish, animals and humans
- ❖ To take all your rubbish back to the hotel
- ❖ To cultivate moral character, civilization and manners
- ❖ To develop unity and modesty through correct guiding thoughts
- ❖ To work hard to develop one's skills
- ❖ To refrain from taking intoxicating substances
- ❖ To refrain from sexual misconduct
- ❖ To be truthful, friendly and opened hearted to all



## PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

### BY CHENG TIN HUNG AND D.J. DOCHERTY

Tai Chi is based on the ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang, combined with the theories of Chinese medicine and martial art movements into one. In the past it was more widely used on the battlefield, but nowadays it is almost exclusively practised for keeping fit, evolving into different styles including the ones shown in this book. Even though the many styles and forms are different, the basic philosophy always remains the same. On the path of the peaceful warrior, it is always important to follow the guidelines in this book, enabling the body's circulation system to flourish, and to avoid, as well as treat, illness. The study and practice of the philosophy of Tai Chi can improve your mental health, and keep the mind balanced. As mental health always influences physical health, and vice versa, Tai Chi cultivates both mental and physical health. You will find that with the regular practice of these exercises, many complicated problems will be healed, longevity will be increased and so too your moral standards.

In learning and straightway practicing is there not pleasure also?      Confucius, 551-479 B.C.

Tai Chi's history as a martial art emphasizes the importance of centering yourself firmly and keeping stable at all times. Any reaction depends on the direction, angle, and speed of an attack. Good balance lets you control your own natural movements, giving you the opportunity to stretch, or deflect an attack and retaliate into your opponent's empty, weak point. This is the central theory of Tai Chi Chuan as a martial art: the body should never lean away from your centre, and always be able to push out with force in any direction. All the actions of the Solo Forms are designed as responses to an enemy's attack from the front, side, or back. Whatever the movement or new situation, always keep the Dan Tien – the central pivoting point in the middle of your body – at the centre of your movements, linking all other body movements together by 'gathering thousands of ways into one.' This also applies to any conflict, or difficult situation with a work colleague, spouse, or friend. It is not just a matter of doing a Tai Chi move to physically defend yourself, but using Tai Chi psychologically to steer yourself through the stormy seas of life, maintaining balance and harmony, wisdom and love in all thoughts, speech and actions. The Peaceful Warrior must have a clear understanding of the aims and theory of Tai Chi. Only then will you be able to improve step by step until you reach the highest state.

### METHOD OF PRACTICE

In order to derive maximum benefit from the practice of Tai Chi, we must first learn the correct method of practicing. The execution of each movement requires patient concentration. Before beginning we must relax and think of nothing else. Our movements should be slow and we should breathe naturally. We must avoid tension. If we can do this our every action will become smooth and easy, our waist will turn freely and we will feel relaxed and comfortable. Tai Chi is an exercise which aims at producing harmony of body and mind. To achieve this and to avoid the application of brute force, we must let our thoughts guide our actions. Constant practice can make this a habit with us. It is not enough to concentrate on the correct slow execution of individual movements such as raising or lowering our hands. Both our concentration and our movements must continue in harmony throughout the form. This will make our breathing deeper and help strengthen our body. At first it is difficult for a beginner to judge whether the styles and individual movements he performs are correct or not. In some cases beginners will find styles which are particularly tricky for them to master. However, there are some general principles to be understood and adopted which will help produce correct styles and movements:

- ♦ Throughout the movements our head should remain in line with our spinal column and not move up and down. If we can do this our neck muscles will become more relaxed.

- ♦ We should not hunch our shoulders or fully straighten our arms when we extend them. When we retract our arms, the elbows should be kept close to the body and not be allowed to jut out at all angles. We must keep our arms and shoulders relaxed in order to move smoothly. If we fail to do so our movements will be stiff and awkward.
- ♦ We must relax our whole body and avoid stiffening the chest. If we can do this our breathing will become deep and natural and our movements alert.
- ♦ If our waist is stiff and tense we will find it difficult to move in any direction and our coordination will be affected as we will be unable to transmit power from the waist to the actions of our arms and hands. If the waist is stiff, our behind will jut out, making our balance unstable and preventing our movements from being graceful. Relaxation of the waist is essential.
- ♦ With certain exceptions, most postures in the Hand Form require us to rest most of our weight on one leg, making it easy to move the other leg to change posture, and to shift the weight from one leg to the other as we practice. The photographs of the form should be studied carefully so that we get this balance right and are able to move freely.

### **TRANQUILITY IN MOTION**

One of the main reasons for practicing the Tai Chi Hand Form slowly, avoiding the application of brute force, is that we can harmonize our thoughts and actions by moving in a smooth and relaxed manner. The Taoists said “seek tranquility in motion”. This means that the slowness of our physical movements when practicing Tai Chi results in peace of mind which enables us to concentrate on performing the exercise to the exclusion of outside distractions. Soft slow practice reduces tension and increases concentration. Thus, over a period of time our physical and mental health will improve. If we are suddenly attacked, we must be able to react swiftly to prevent our opponent completing his assault. This ability to react swiftly depends upon our body remaining relaxed in such a situation. By constant, soft, slow practice we can make our muscles and tendons relaxed. This will allow our joints to rotate smoothly, making us swift and agile in defense and counterattack. Lao Tzu said “The unbending breaks, the yielding survives”. Our softness allows us to yield before even the strongest attack. But just as bamboo which has bent before the wind swings back when the wind has ceased, so too our defense must change to attack at the right moment. There is no set length of time for practicing the Hand Form from beginning to end. The young tend to exercise a little faster than the old, but fifteen minutes is about right.

### **THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING TAI CHI**

Many city dwellers, owing to the pressures of work, traffic congestion and other factors do not take proper exercise. As a result, they may become victims of mental strain, nervous tension and other maladies which will detract from their efficiency in their daily work. There are many sports and pastimes which cater to the desires of those amongst us who wish to acquire a fit and healthy body. However, it is difficult to find a system of exercise suitable for persons of all ages, which requires little or no special equipment, and which can be practiced in a relatively small area either indoors or outdoors. Tai Chi is such a system of exercise. Those who practice regularly will develop a healthy body and an alert mind. This improvement in their health will better enable them to concentrate on their routine tasks and to make effective decisions, all of which leads in turn to a greater success in their chosen career.

The Tai Chi Hand Form, with its graceful movements and alert actions, resembles a classical dance. Through the execution of complex maneuvers in conjunction with deep regulated breathing and the contraction and expansion of the diaphragm, the Hand Form offers a

balanced drill to the body's muscles and joints. Over a period of time, the central nervous system will be stimulated by the tranquil state of mind and dedicated concentration on the movements which result from the performance of the Hand Form. This serves to increase the well-being of all the organs of the body as their efficient functioning depends very largely on a sound central nervous system.

We can look upon the practice of Tai Chi in two ways. First it is a method of physical exercise. Secondly, it acts as a catalyst in that when performed by our body it causes certain beneficial reactions to take place. As our muscles move they exert pressure on our veins, forcing our blood to flow towards the heart, improving our circulation. Meanwhile, the deep breathing necessary for performance of the Hand Form causes the diaphragm to expand outwards and downwards and contract inwards and upwards, and this movement of the diaphragm gently “massages” the liver and intestines. Those who suffer from indigestion will benefit from practicing Tai Chi, as the exercise which the stomach muscles receive will improve the digestion, leading to an increased appetite and the prevention of constipation. Middle-aged and elderly persons will find this of particular comfort.

Since the breathing in Tai Chi is so deep that there is a greater intake of air into the lungs than usual, a greater amount of oxygen is available for consumption and this increases blood circulation. In so doing it also expands the blood vessels which serve the heart and intestines. Therefore Tai Chi helps prevent thrombosis and many other ailments of the heart and intestines. The natural process of human life requires that we take in oxygen and all sorts nutrients. After various transformations, these are conveyed to different parts of body, through the medium of the bloodstream. Once they have undergone certain physical and chemical processes, part of the materials taken in are converted to waste products which are then excreted. This process is called “substitution” and without it the spark of life would be extinguished. If substitution is going on in an inefficient manner, arteriosclerosis and other complaints may result, as is often the case with the elderly. As Tai Chi strengthens the central nervous system, improves blood circulation, stimulates the operation of the heart and intestines and promotes better digestion, it also safeguards the process of substitution and helps prevent sickness.

The graceful movements of Tai Chi flow like the running water of streams and rivers, while the tranquillity of mind is that aimed for in Taoism. It is this that can lead to changes in our disposition, making us more even-tempered and slow to anger. We can go a stage further. The philosophy of our art is to concentrate on the use of the brain rather than brawn, to let thought guide our actions, and this is a principle we should try to apply to our daily lives. “Mens sana in corpore sano” (a healthy mind in a healthy body) is what Tai Chi Chuan can give us, but only if we invest the necessary time and effort.

As we have seen the origins of Tai Chi lie in Taoism. The Taoists themselves used a special method of breathing modelled on the respiratory system of the tortoise, whose hard shell limits the outward expansion of its lungs. Its lungs are therefore forced to expand by extending down the length of its body rather than outwards, thus making its breathing deep and harmonious. The tortoise may move slowly, but it lives a long time. This is why first the Taoists and later the founders of Tai Chi adopted and adapted this breathing method. Our heart and lungs work incessantly to keep our body alive and in good health. To maintain this state of affairs we have a duty to protect them from too much stress and strain when we engage in exercise. Most forms of exercise require lung expansion when we inhale. This expansion forces our muscles and ribs outwards thus increasing the chest's capacity to take in air. However, this puts a lot of pressure on our lungs and can easily tire us out. In the same way, a car which is constantly travelling uphill will sooner or later develop engine trouble. In practising Tai Chi we do not use this common method of

breathing, which is particularly unsuitable for the sick and those who have passed their prime. We concentrate instead on making our movements relaxed and harmonious and our postures natural so that our breathing will also be natural and not forced.

Constant practice of Tai Chi over a period of time will make our breathing slow and deep, while our internal organs will work in a gentle and harmonious fashion. When we inhale, our diaphragm will expand not only outwards, but also downwards in the direction of the abdomen, giving our lungs more space to expand downwards also. When we exhale, our lungs contract causing the diaphragm to contract also, both inwards and upwards. The rising and falling motions of the diaphragm help our lungs to function properly. At the same time the rhythmic nature of the diaphragm's movements act to massage our stomach and intestines, gently increasing the circulation of blood and transportation of nutrition. This whole process of respiration in Tai Chi is called "the downward extension of breath to the Dan Tien". (A point one-and-a-half-inches below the navel.)

This is not to say that our diaphragm can or does expand downwards to the Dan Tien, but only that the effect of the downward movement of the diaphragm is to cause the other organs of our body to expand downwards or to contract in proportion to the movements of the diaphragm. This effect is most keenly felt at the Dan Tien. What has happened is that the constant practice of Tai Chi relaxes the muscles of the diaphragm enabling it to expand downwards instead of merely outwards. There is a common misconception that the air we breathe is brought down to the Dan Tien. This is an illogical and unscientific notion.

Try to practice daily to derive maximum benefit from the art. Watch the instructor when he is teaching others and watch others perform so that by comparing techniques, good points can be adopted and bad ones corrected. Think about and analyze the styles after learning them properly. Ask the instructor questions about the styles to clear up any doubts or ambiguities.

### **SUCCESS IN TAI CHI**

All religions, races and creeds may practise Tai Chi Chuan. It is not necessary to argue the binaric origins of these ancient Chinese techniques. Those who can comprehend the great Laws of the Universe know that Tai Chi is the perfection of philosophy in practice, and therefore takes its rightful place in the Divine Science of Life. God does not compel or induce us to practise Tai Chi Chuan. He exerts no effort on our behalf. We are free to practise Tai Chi, or not to practise Tai Chi, as we wish. Success depends entirely on our own efforts. Success in Tai Chi Chuan is purifying the mind and body, releasing vast resources of spiritual energy, being mindful of every thought, speech and action, and being in the present moment with love, wisdom and compassion. There will be success and joy in life, over-flowing with positive thinking and humour, consciously making positive changes and virtuous choices in thought, speech, effort, livelihood and behaviour, and living a more meaningful and purposeful life. If you know Truth, you are at peace.

I cannot teach you, only help you to explore yourself. Nothing more.      Bruce Lee, 1940-1973

The purpose of Tai Chi Chuan is to gain personal experience of all stages of the path to enlightenment. You can share these insights in the way you live your life. Although it is far easier to be in harmony when you are sitting quietly alone, your meditation will be worthless if you do not put your experiences to practical use in daily activities. When you are mindful of all your thoughts, speech and action and can create love, wisdom and compassion in every second of every minute of every day, then you have not only succeeded in Tai Chi, but you have truly succeeded in life, in reaching your full potential as a human being. Tai Chi Chuan is an evolutionary process and like nature, if you study it long enough, you will come to understand that change is not a choice, it happens, and over time you are different. With patience, gentleness and determination Tai Chi can make this

change a positive one. Tai Chi introduces us to ways of seeing that create opportunities for us to recognise ourselves better. Tai Chi helps each of us to attain what was previously unattainable. Therefore, practise Tai Chi every day with positive thinking and persistence under the guidance of a qualified Tai Chi instructor. Tai Chi is a journey of self-realisation and self-discovery that cannot be bought by the hour in a Tai Chi class. It must be earned through diligent self-practice. It cannot be given in a book or DVD; you must experience it for yourself.

### **JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY**

The journey of self-discovery through Tai Chi takes each of us in a different direction. As we go deeper and deeper into Tao philosophy, practice and meditation, we begin to discover our own truth, our own experience of the soul, life, creation and the cosmos, and eventually it will bring us to the ultimate truth and divinity of all things. And this is the happiness, freedom and enlightenment that we all seek. This book has offered limited explanation on the actual experience of Tai Chi. This is because everyone is different and will have different thought patterns and interpretations. This is the journey you must make yourself, your own discoveries, your own realisations, your own Truth.

When we begin our journey on the path of the Peaceful Warrior it is important to re-evaluate our lifestyle and the direction we are heading with our life. We should examine all activity as it happens, and how our mind observes and perceives its thoughts, speech and actions, how it responds, creates and reacts according to different outside or inside stimuli. It is important to slow down the mind and actually be in the present moment, focusing fully in the here and now. In the midst of everyday activities, the mind is kept continually distracted with details. People move from one thing to the next without a pause. Even at the end of the day when the mind could take some time to reflect, most people fill their leisure hours with structured activity. Daily tension and stress does not have any way to release or disperse. They continue to build and store up within us.

Stillness in meditation directly relaxes the mind, releases tension and stress, and awakens it to the potentials that are present in each and every person. In meditation we discover how thoroughly our life is shaped by our thoughts and the way we interpret what's going on. Every thought, feeling and emotion manifests itself in one form or another in our body and in our life. We notice this with surprising clarity as we become more sensitive to the inner feeling of who we are. When we open our mind to meditation, change becomes possible. Problems dissolve and deeper wisdom emerges. Tao Meditation carries us directly to the depths, steering through the continuous flow of conscious thought, navigating into calm seas, and revealing reality in its crystal-clear reflection. Tai Chi helps us to experience emptiness and undergo a profound transformation of our experience of the world. It is a firsthand method; nothing can substitute for the personal exploration of our own mind. By regularly practising we can delve into our own consciousness with meditative exploration and come to our own profound and meaningful understandings.

To myself I am only a child playing on the beach, while vast oceans of truth lie undiscovered before me.  
Isaac Newton, 1642-1727

After the regular practice of Tai Chi considerable changes begin to take place in the mind, brain and nervous system. New nerve-currents, new cells, new vibrations, new avenues and new channels are formed. The whole mind and nervous system become remodelled. We will have a new mind, a new heart, new sensations, new feelings, new mode of thinking and acting and a new view of the universe. Diligent practice and persistence with Tai Chi produces results that are permanent and abiding. The greatest minds in history, including Einstein, Gandhi, Isaac Newton, Lao Tzu, Confucius and the Buddha, have all emphasised that the journey of self-discovery and spiritual evolution is man's greatest adventure, and should be pursued as the ultimate supreme goal of human existence.



The origins of both Taoism and Tai Chi Chuan are shrouded in mystery. Were Chang San-feng, the legendary creator of Tai Chi, and Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, mythical figures or real historical personages? Did they exist and create as singular geniuses or were their respective arts and legacies the result of a combined effort by many talented and insightful people whose collective endeavors, over time, came to be assigned a more grandiose origin? Though we may never be able to answer fully such questions, throughout the years one thing is certain: much has been made of Tai Chi Chuan's connection with Taoist philosophy. Outside of Confucianism, Taoism is probably the most important and influential school of thought native to China. In almost direct contrast to the solemn gravity and social responsibilities endemic to Confucian ideals, where the rectification of human actions and interactions is paramount, the Taoists prize contemplation of the natural world. In this world, man is not a central but almost an incidental figure. The Taoist often forsakes society and worldly affairs in order to embrace the Tao, (meaning "Way" or "How") to bring himself better into harmony with the flow of nature and to pierce through the veils of illusion and artifice that human civilizations, with their many facets and complexities, seem to constantly weave. These two schools of thought, Confucianism and Taoism, stand in opposition to one another. Each expresses a different aspect of the Chinese psyche. While Confucius would have us dwell in the orderly world of mundane human intercourse, the Taoists offer us a more mystical and transcendental world of the spirit and promise us a deeper insight into the principles that underlie the very operation of the universe itself. Taoism stresses harmonizing the mind and body in order to attune oneself to the natural order.

### LAO TZU BY JAMES LEPORATI

Lao Tzu, the legendary founder of Taoism, was an older contemporary of Confucius. Anecdotal stories tell of at least one meeting between the two philosophical giants with Confucius coming away perplexed and somewhat in awe of his elder, comparing Lao Tzu to a "Dragon who flies among the clouds." Not much is known of Lao Tzu concretely, but there are many legends and stories concerning him. It is said that at age 160, he decided to resign his position as keeper of the archives for the court of Chou at Loyang and retire to peace, solitude and contemplation. As he departed, a gatekeeper implored the sage to please compose a book coalescing his teachings so that they would not perish when Lao Tzu withdrew from the world. It was then that Lao Tzu wrote the 5000 character classic and central treatise of Taoism, the Tao Te Ching. A short, highly mystical work, it consists of only 81 verses. The teachings of Lao Tzu are based on a great underlying principle, the Tao or "Way," which is the source of all being. Through the understanding of this principle, all the contradictions, divisions and distinctions of our existence are ultimately resolved. This principle can only be understood intuitively. Grasping the Tao intellectually or through some rationally derived procedure is pointless. The ancient texts tell us that the Tao is and must always remain essentially beyond the human ability to describe it, and can only be fully understood through a kind of mystical and internal transformation. This intuitive transformation simply removes the obstacles clouding our consciousness and connects us once again to our original insight which allows us to see clearly and understand the workings and wonders of the cosmos. Taoism then, does not seek to advance man to some new state of being, merely to return him to his original and natural consciousness. The way of life which one achieves after union with the Tao is often hallmarked by a kind of yielding passivity, an absence of strife and coercion and a manner of acting which is completely effortless, free of artifice and spontaneous.



## TAOISM AND TAI CHI CHUAN BY JAMES LEPORATI

Like Lao Tzu, many of the greatest contributors to the development of Tai Chi Chuan were simple men, not necessarily well-versed in the various philosophical schools and literature of their times. Perhaps they even lacked the requisite literacy to read the salient texts of Taoism and the voluminous commentaries on them. Yet, Tai Chi Chuan has perhaps the greatest literary tradition associated with any martial practice to date. This paradox is resolved by the eventual adoption of the art by more scholarly figures as time progressed. It is known that Tai Chi Chuan was held in high esteem at the royal court (perhaps due to the efforts of the Yang family Tai Chi patriarch Yang Lu-chan). It is reasonable to assume that the Chinese literati were both entranced and impressed by the art's effortless perfection. These more scholarly practitioners might have easily concluded that the principles underlying Tai Chi were in perfect accord with the Tao Te Ching. Examples are numerous. The Tao Te Ching seems to reflect philosophically the physical movements and skills which underscore the art of Tai Chi. It almost seems a primer in itself as one reads through the text:

Verse 22:  
Therefore the ancients say, "Yield and overcome."  
Is that an empty saying?

Verse 43:  
The softest thing in the universe  
Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.

Verse 76:  
The hard and strong will fall  
The soft and weak will overcome them.

Verse 78:  
The weak can overcome the strong;  
The supple can overcome the stiff.  
Under heaven everyone knows this,  
Yet no one puts it into practice.

These verses illustrate the central principle of Tai Chi: yielding to the opponent's force.

Verse 26:  
The heavy is the root of the light;  
The still is the master of unrest.  
To be light is to lose one's root.  
To be restless is to lose one's control.

A warning concerning root and balance as well as a strategy, this is sound advice for the Tai Chi Chuan adept. These concepts find their mirror in the Song of the 13 Postures:

Being still, when attacked by the opponent  
Be tranquil and move in stillness  
My changes caused by the opponent fill him with wonder

Verse 36:  
That which shrinks/ Must first expand.  
That which fails/ Must first be strong.  
That which is cast down  
Must first be raised

Wu Yu-hsiang's 'Expositions of Insights into the Practice of the Thirteen Postures' relates:

First seek extension, then contraction; then it (the movements) can be fine and subtle.

The reference to the use of excessive, hard muscular strength (li) equating with failure of one's technique are also common in Tai Chi literature. The Tao Te Ching illustrates this concept with the lines (Verses 30 and 55): "Force is followed by loss of strength" and "If too much energy is used, exhaustion follows." Obviously these are references to hard and inflexible force the use of which does not equate with the dexterous and lively chi energies cultivated by the Tai Chi Chuan practitioner.

In regard to strategy, the Taoist axiom "That which is cast down must first be raised," equates with the lifting up or severing of the opponent's root before discharging energy against him during applications. Verse 15 asks us: "Who can remain still until the moment of action?" This causes Wu Yu-hsiang to reflect in Expositions: "It is said, 'If others don't move, I don't move. If others move slightly, I move first.'" How should one's footwork be structured during combat? Verse 41 of the Tao suggests: "Going forward seems like retreat," while Master Cheng explains in The Song of Form and Function: "When the foot wants to advance/First shift it backwards." In its application as an attacking gesture, the posture "Step Back and Repulse Monkey" epitomizes this "advancing while apparently retreating" method of footwork.

What about the highest level of the art of Tai Chi Chuan? Verse 41 of the Tao states: "The greatest form has no shape." For the Tai Chi practitioner this could be said to be the ultimate goal: a state in which the underlying principles are so deeply ingrained that form itself becomes unimportant. Where the mind leads, the energy will naturally manifest itself in a spontaneous and proper way. In the Tai Chi Chuan Ching by Chang San-Feng he says simply:

Up or down  
Front or back  
Left or right, one all the same.

A more contemporary master, Cheng Man-ching in his Song of Form and Function offers us:

Not neutralizing, it naturally neutralizes,  
Not yielding, it naturally yields...  
In push hands.../The whole body is a hand  
And the hand is not a hand.  
But the mind must stay  
In the place it should be.

Tai Chi Chuan and Taoism are inexorably linked together. Tai Chi is a physical representation of Taoist ideals, the ungraspable made graspable through physical principles whose very movement reflects the motion of the Tao itself.



# TAO TE CHING

by Lao Tzu

Translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English  
Vintage Books 1989

1

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.  
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and Earth.  
The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.  
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.  
Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.  
These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness.  
Darkness within darkness.  
The gate to all mystery.

2

Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness.  
All can know good as good only because there is evil.  
Therefore having and not having arise together.  
Difficult and easy complement each other.  
Long and short contrast each other:  
High and low rest upon each other;  
Voice and sound harmonize each other;  
Front and back follow one another.  
Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing, teaching no-talking.  
The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease,  
Creating, yet not.  
Working, yet not taking credit.  
Work is done, then forgotten.  
Therefore it lasts forever.

3

Not exalting the gifted prevents quarreling.  
Not collecting treasures prevents stealing.  
Not seeing desirable things prevents confusion of the heart.  
The wise therefore rule by emptying hearts and stuffing bellies, by weakening ambitions and strengthening bones.  
If men lack knowledge and desire, then clever people will not try to interfere.  
If nothing is done, then all will be well.

4

The Tao is an empty vessel; it is used, but never filled.  
Oh, unfathomable source of ten thousand things!  
Blunt the sharpness,  
Untangle the knot,  
Soften the glare,  
Merge with dust.  
Oh, hidden deep but ever present!  
I do not know from whence it comes.  
It is the forefather of the gods.

5

Heaven and Earth are impartial;  
They see the ten thousand things as straw dogs.  
The wise are impartial;  
They see the people as straw dogs.  
The space between heaven and Earth is like a bellows.  
The shape changes but not the form;  
The more it moves, the more it yields.  
More words count less.  
Hold fast to the center.

6

The valley spirit never dies;  
It is the woman, primal mother.  
Her gateway is the root of heaven and Earth.  
It is like a veil barely seen.  
Use it; it will never fail.

7

Heaven and Earth last forever.  
Why do heaven and Earth last forever?  
They are unborn,  
So ever living.  
The sage stays behind, thus he is ahead.  
He is detached, thus at one with all.  
Through selfless action, he attains fulfillment.

8

The highest good is like water.  
Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.  
It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.  
In dwelling, be close to the land.  
In meditation, go deep in the heart.  
In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.  
In speech, be true.  
In ruling, be just.  
In daily life, be competent.  
In action, be aware of the time and the season.  
No fight: No blame.

9

Better to stop short than fill to the brim.  
Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt.  
Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it.  
Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow.  
Retire when the work is done.  
This is the way of heaven.

10

Carrying body and soul and embracing the one,  
Can you avoid separation?  
Attending fully and becoming supple,  
Can you be as a newborn babe?  
Washing and cleansing the primal vision,  
Can you be without stain?  
Loving all men and ruling the country,  
Can you be without cleverness?  
Opening and closing the gates of heaven,  
Can you play the role of woman?

Understanding and being open to all things,  
Are you able to do nothing?  
Giving birth and nourishing,  
Bearing yet not possessing,  
Working yet not taking credit,  
Leading yet not dominating,  
This is the Primal Virtue.

11

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;  
It is the center hole that makes it useful.  
Shape clay into a vessel;  
It is the space within that makes it useful.  
Cut doors and windows for a room;  
It is the holes which make it useful.  
Therefore benefit comes from what is there;  
Usefulness from what is not there.

12

The five colors blind the eye.  
The five tones deafen the ear.  
The five flavors dull the taste.  
Racing and hunting madden the mind.  
Precious things lead one astray.  
Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels and not by what he sees.  
He lets go of that and chooses this.

13

Accept disgrace willingly.  
Accept misfortune as the human condition.  
What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?  
Accept being unimportant.  
Do not be concerned with loss or gain.  
This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."  
What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the human condition"?  
Misfortune comes from having a body.  
Without a body, how could there be misfortune?  
Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be trusted to care for all things.  
Love the world as your own self; then you can truly care for all things.

14

Look, it cannot be seen - it is beyond form.  
Listen, it cannot be heard - it is beyond sound.  
Grasp, it cannot be held - it is intangible.  
These three are indefinable;  
Therefore they are joined in one.  
From above it is not bright;  
From below it is not dark:  
An unbroken thread beyond description.  
It returns to nothingness.  
The form of the formless,  
The image of the imageless,  
It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.  
Stand before it and there is no beginning.  
Follow it and there is no end.  
Stay with the ancient Tao,  
Move with the present.  
Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.

15

The ancient masters were subtle, mysterious, profound, responsive.  
The depth of their knowledge is unfathomable.  
Because it is unfathomable,  
All we can do is describe their appearance.  
Watchful, like men crossing a winter stream.  
Alert, like men aware of danger.  
Courteous, like visiting guests.  
Yielding like ice about to melt.  
Simple, like uncarved blocks of wood.  
Hollow, like caves.  
Opaque, like muddy pools.  
Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?  
Who can remain still until the moment of action?  
Observers of the Tao do not seek fulfillment.  
Not seeking fulfillment, they are not swayed by desire for change.

16

Empty yourself of everything.  
Let the mind become still.  
The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return.  
They grow and flourish and then return to the source.  
Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.  
The way of nature is unchanging.  
Knowing constancy is insight.  
Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.  
Knowing constancy, the mind is open.  
With an open mind, you will be openhearted.  
Being openhearted, you will act royally.  
Being royal, you will attain the divine.  
Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.  
Being at one with the Tao is eternal.  
And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.

17

The very highest if barely known.  
Then comes that which people know and love.  
Then that which is feared,  
Then that which is despised.  
Who does not trust enough will not be trusted.  
When actions are performed  
Without unnecessary speech,  
People say, "We did it!"

18

When the great Tao is forgotten,  
Kindness and morality arise.  
When wisdom and intelligence are born,  
The great pretense begins.  
When there is no peace within the family,  
Filial piety and devotion arise.  
When the country is confused and in chaos,  
Loyal ministers appear.

19

Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom,  
And it will be a hundred times better for everyone.



Give up kindness, renounce morality,  
And men will rediscover filial piety and love.  
Give up ingenuity, renounce profit,  
And bandits and thieves will disappear.  
These three are outward forms alone; they are not sufficient in themselves.  
It is more important  
To see the simplicity,  
To realize one's true nature,  
To cast off selfishness  
And temper desire.

20

Give up learning, and put an end to your troubles.  
Is there a difference between yes and no?  
Is there a difference between good and evil?  
Must I fear what others fear? What nonsense!  
Other people are contented, enjoying the sacrificial feast of the ox.  
In spring some go to the park, and climb the terrace,  
But I alone am drifting, not knowing where I am.  
Like a newborn babe before it learns to smile,  
I am alone, without a place to go.  
Others have more than they need, but I alone have nothing.  
I am a fool. Oh, yes! I am confused.  
Others are clear and bright,  
But I alone am dim and weak.  
Others are sharp and clever,  
But I alone am dull and stupid.  
Oh, I drift like the waves of the sea,  
Without direction, like the restless wind.  
Everyone else is busy,  
But I alone am aimless and depressed.  
I am different.  
I am nourished by the great mother.

21

The greatest Virtue is to follow Tao and Tao alone.  
The Tao is elusive and intangible.  
Oh, it is intangible and elusive, and yet within is image.  
Oh, it is elusive and intangible, and yet within is form.  
Oh, it is dim and dark, and yet within is essence.  
This essence is very real, and therein lies faith.  
From the very beginning until now its name has never been forgotten.  
Thus I perceive the creation.  
How do I know the ways of creation?  
Because of this.

22

Yield and overcome;  
Bend and be straight;  
Empty and be full;  
Wear out and be new;  
Have little and gain;  
Have much and be confused.  
Therefore the wise embrace the one  
And set an example to all.  
Not putting on a display,  
They shine forth.

Not justifying themselves,  
They are distinguished.  
Not boasting,  
They receive recognition.  
Not bragging,  
They never falter.  
They do not quarrel,  
So no one quarrels with them.  
Therefore the ancients say, "Yield and overcome."  
Is that an empty saying?  
Be really whole,  
And all things will come to you.

23

To talk little is natural.  
High winds do not last all morning.  
Heavy rain does not last all day.  
Why is this? Heaven and Earth!  
If heaven and Earth cannot make things eternal,  
How is it possible for man?  
He who follows the Tao  
Is at one with the Tao.  
He who is virtuous  
Experiences Virtue.  
He who loses the way  
Is lost.  
When you are at one with the Tao,  
The Tao welcomes you.  
When you are at one with Virtue,  
The Virtue is always there.  
When you are at one with loss,  
The loss is experienced willingly.  
He who does not trust enough  
Will not be trusted.

24

He who stands on tiptoe is not steady.  
He who strides cannot maintain the pace.  
He who makes a show is not enlightened.  
He who is self-righteous is not respected.  
He who boasts achieves nothing.  
He who brags will not endure.  
According to followers of the Tao,  
"These are extra food and unnecessary luggage."  
They do not bring happiness.  
therefore followers of the Tao avoid them.

25

Something mysteriously formed,  
Born before heaven and Earth.  
In the silence and the void,  
Standing alone and unchanging,  
Ever present and in motion.  
Perhaps it is the mother of ten thousand things.  
I do not know its name  
Call it Tao.  
For lack of a better word, I call it great.

Being great, it flows  
I flows far away.  
Having gone far, it returns.  
Therefore, "Tao is great;  
Heaven is great;  
Earth is great;  
The king is also great."  
These are the four great powers of the universe,  
And the king is one of them.  
Man follows Earth.  
Earth follows heaven.  
Heaven follows the Tao.  
Tao follows what is natural.

26

The heavy is the root of the light.  
The still is the master of unrest.  
Therefore the sage, traveling all day,  
Does not lose sight of his baggage.  
Though there are beautiful things to be seen,  
He remains unattached and calm.  
Why should the lord of ten thousand chariots act lightly in public?  
To be light is to lose one's root.  
To be restless is to lose one's control.

27

A good walker leaves no tracks;  
A good speaker makes no slips;  
A good reckoner needs no tally.  
A good door needs no lock,  
Yet no one can open it.  
Good binding requires no knots,  
Yet no one can loosen it.  
Therefore the sage takes care of all men  
And abandons no one.  
He takes care of all things  
And abandons nothing.  
This is called "following the light."  
What is a good man?  
A teacher of a bad man.  
What is a bad man?  
A good man's charge.  
If the teacher is not respected,  
And the student not cared for,  
Confusion will arise, however clever one is.  
This is the crux of mystery.

28

Know the strength of man,  
But keep a woman's care!  
Be the stream of the universe!  
Being the stream of the universe,  
Ever true and unswerving,  
Become as a little child once more.  
Know the white,  
But keep the black!  
Be an example to the world!

Being an example to the world,  
Ever true and unwavering,  
Return to the infinite.  
Know honor,  
Yet keep humility.  
Be the valley of the universe!  
Being the valley of the universe,  
Ever true and resourceful,  
Return to the state of the uncarved block.  
When the block is carved, it becomes useful.  
When the sage uses it, he becomes the ruler.  
Thus, "A great tailor cuts little."

29

Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?  
I do not believe it can be done.  
The universe is sacred.  
You cannot improve it.  
If you try to change it, you will ruin it.  
If you try to hold it, you will lose it.  
So sometimes things are ahead and sometimes they are behind;  
Sometimes breathing is hard, sometimes it comes easily;  
Sometimes there is strength and sometimes weakness;  
Sometimes one is up and sometimes down.  
Therefore the sage avoids extremes, excesses, and complacency.

30

Whenever you advise a ruler in the way of Tao,  
Counsel him not to use force to conquer the universe.  
For this would only cause resistance.  
Thorn bushes spring up wherever the army has passed.  
Lean years follow in the wake of a great war.  
Just do what needs to be done.  
Never take advantage of power.  
Achieve results,  
But never glory in them.  
Achieve results,  
But never boast.  
Achieve results,  
But never be proud.  
Achieve results,  
Because this is the natural way.  
Achieve results,  
But not through violence.  
Force is followed by loss of strength.  
This is not the way of Tao.  
That which goes against the Tao comes to an early end.

31

Good weapons are instruments of fear; all creatures hate them.  
Therefore followers of Tao never use them.  
The wise man prefers the left.  
The man of war prefers the right.  
Weapons are instruments of fear; they are not a wise man's tools.  
He uses them only when he has no choice.  
Peace and quiet are dear to his heart,  
And victory no cause for rejoicing.

If you rejoice in victory, then you delight in killing;  
If you delight in killing, you cannot fulfill yourself.  
On happy occasions precedence is given to the left,  
On sad occasions to the right.  
In the army the general stands on the left,  
The commander-in-chief on the right.  
This means that war is conducted like a funeral.  
When many people are being killed,  
They should be mourned in heartfelt sorrow.  
That is why a victory must be observed like a funeral.

32

The Tao is forever undefined.  
Small though it is in the unformed state, it cannot be grasped.  
If kings and lords could harness it,  
The ten thousand things would come together  
And gentle rain fall.  
Men would need no more instruction and all things would take their course.  
Once the whole is divided, the parts need names.  
There are already enough names.  
One must know when to stop.  
Knowing when to stop averts trouble.  
Tao in the world is like a river flowing home to the sea.

33

Knowing others is wisdom;  
Knowing the self is enlightenment.  
Mastering others requires force;  
Mastering the self needs strength.  
He who knows he has enough is rich.  
Perseverance is a sign of willpower.  
He who stays where he is endures.  
To die but not to perish is to be eternally present.

34

The great Tao flows everywhere, both to the left and to the right.  
The ten thousand things depend upon it; it holds nothing back.  
It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.  
It nourishes the ten thousand things,  
And yet is not their lord.  
It has no aim; it is very small.  
The ten thousand things return to it,  
Yet it is not their lord.  
It is very great.  
It does not show greatness,  
And is therefore truly great.

35

All men will come to him who keeps to the one,  
For there lie rest and happiness and peace.  
Passersby may stop for music and good food,  
But a description of the Tao  
Seems without substance or flavor.  
It cannot be seen, it cannot be heard,  
And yet it cannot be exhausted.

36

That which shrinks  
Must first expand.

That which fails  
Must first be strong.  
That which is cast down  
Must first be raised.  
Before receiving  
There must be giving.  
This is called perception of the nature of things.  
Soft and weak overcome hard and strong.  
Fish cannot leave deep waters,  
And a country's weapons should not be displayed.

37

Tao abides in non-action,  
Yet nothing is left undone.  
If kings and lords observed this,  
The ten thousand things would develop naturally.  
If they still desired to act,  
They would return to the simplicity of formless substance.  
Without for there is no desire.  
Without desire there is.  
And in this way all things would be at peace.

38

A truly good man is not aware of his goodness,  
And is therefore good.  
A foolish man tries to be good,  
And is therefore not good.  
A truly good man does nothing,  
Yet leaves nothing undone.  
A foolish man is always doing,  
Yet much remains to be done.  
When a truly kind man does something, he leaves nothing undone.  
When a just man does something, he leaves a great deal to be done.  
When a disciplinarian does something and no one responds,  
He rolls up his sleeves in an attempt to enforce order.  
Therefore when Tao is lost, there is goodness.  
When goodness is lost, there is kindness.  
When kindness is lost, there is justice.  
When justice is lost, there ritual.  
Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the beginning of confusion.  
Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of Tao.  
It is the beginning of folly.  
Therefore the truly great man dwells on what is real and not what is on the surface,  
On the fruit and not the flower.  
Therefore accept the one and reject the other.

39

These things from ancient times arise from one:  
The sky is whole and clear.  
The earth is whole and firm.  
The spirit is whole and strong.  
The valley is whole and full.  
The ten thousand things are whole and alive.  
Kings and lords are whole, and the country is upright.  
All these are in virtue of wholeness.  
The clarity of the sky prevents its falling.  
The firmness of the earth prevents its splitting.

The strength of the spirit prevents its being used up.  
The fullness of the valley prevents its running dry.  
The growth of the ten thousand things prevents their drying out.  
The leadership of kings and lords prevents the downfall of the country.  
Therefore the humble is the root of the noble.  
The low is the foundation of the high.  
Princes and lords consider themselves "orphaned", "widowed" and "worthless".  
Do they not depend on being humble?  
Too much success is not an advantage.  
Do not tinkle like jade  
Or clatter like stone chimes.

40

Returning is the motion of the Tao.  
Yielding is the way of the Tao.  
The ten thousand things are born of being.  
Being is born of not being.

41

The wise student hears of the Tao and practices it diligently.  
The average student hears of the Tao and gives it thought now and again.  
The foolish student hears of the Tao and laughs aloud.  
If there were no laughter, the Tao would not be what it is.  
Hence it is said:  
The bright path seems dim;  
Going forward seems like retreat;  
The easy way seems hard;  
The highest Virtue seems empty;  
Great purity seems sullied;  
A wealth of Virtue seems inadequate;  
The strength of Virtue seems frail;  
Real Virtue seems unreal;  
The perfect square has no corners;  
Great talents ripen late;  
The highest notes are hard to hear;  
The greatest form has no shape;  
The Tao is hidden and without name.  
The Tao alone nourishes and brings everything to fulfillment.

42

The Tao begot one.  
One begot two.  
Two begot three.  
And three begot the ten thousand things.  
The ten thousand things carry yin and embrace yang.  
They achieve harmony by combining these forces.  
Men hate to be "orphaned," "widowed," or "worthless,"  
But this is how kings and lords describe themselves.  
For one gains by losing  
And loses by gaining.  
What others teach, I also teach; that is:  
"A violent man will die a violent death!"  
This will be the essence of my teaching.

43

The softest thing in the universe  
Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.  
That without substance can enter where there is no room.



Hence I know the value of non-action.  
Teaching without words and work without doing  
Are understood by very few.

44

Fame or self: Which matters more?  
Self or wealth: Which is more precious?  
Gain or loss: Which is more painful?  
He who is attached to things will suffer much.  
He who saves will suffer heavy loss.  
A contented man is never disappointed.  
He who knows when to stop does not find himself in trouble.  
He will stay forever safe.

45

Great accomplishment seems imperfect,  
Yet it does not outlive its usefulness.  
Great fullness seems empty,  
Yet cannot be exhausted.  
Great straightness seems twisted.  
Great intelligence seems stupid.  
Great eloquence seems awkward.  
Movement overcomes cold.  
Stillness overcomes heat.  
Stillness and tranquillity set things in order in the universe.

46

When the Tao is present in the universe,  
The horses haul manure.  
When the Tao is absent from the universe,  
War horses are bred outside the city.  
There is no greater sin than desire,  
No greater curse than discontent,  
No greater misfortune than wanting something for oneself.  
Therefore he who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.

47

Without going outside, you may know the whole world.  
Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven.  
The farther you go, the less you know.  
Thus the sage knows without traveling;  
He sees without looking;  
He works without doing.

48

In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.  
In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped.  
Less and less is done  
Until non-action is achieved.  
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.  
The world is ruled by letting things take their course.  
It cannot be ruled by interfering.

49

The sage has no mind of his own.  
He is aware of the needs of others.  
I am good to people who are good.  
I am also good to people who are not good.  
Because Virtue is goodness.  
I have faith in people who are faithful.

I also have faith in people who are not faithful.  
Because Virtue is faithfulness.  
The sage is shy and humble - to the world he seems confusing.  
Others look to him and listen.  
He behaves like a little child.

50

Between birth and death,  
Three in ten are followers of life,  
Three in ten are followers of death,  
And men just passing from birth to death also number three in ten.  
Why is this so?  
Because they live their lives on the gross level.  
He who knows how to live can walk abroad  
Without fear of rhinoceros or tiger.  
He will not be wounded in battle.  
For in him rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust their horn,  
Tigers no place to use their claws,  
And weapons no place to pierce.  
Why is this so?  
Because he has no place for death to enter.

51

All things arise from Tao.  
They are nourished by Virtue.  
They are formed from matter.  
They are shaped by environment.  
Thus the ten thousand things all respect Tao and honor Virtue.  
Respect of Tao and honor of Virtue are not demanded,  
But they are in the nature of things.  
Therefore all things arise from Tao.  
By Virtue they are nourished,  
Developed, cared for,  
Sheltered, comforted,  
Grown, and protected.  
Creating without claiming,  
Doing without taking credit,  
Guiding without interfering,  
This is Primal Virtue.

52

The beginning of the universe  
Is the mother of all things.  
Knowing the mother, one also knows the sons.  
Knowing the sons, yet remaining in touch with the mother,  
Brings freedom from the fear of death.  
Keep your mouth shut,  
Guard the senses,  
And life is ever full.  
Open your mouth,  
Always be busy,  
And life is beyond hope.  
Seeing the small is insight;  
Yielding to force is strength.  
Using the outer light, return to insight,  
And in this way be saved from harm.  
This is learning constancy.

53

If I have even just a little sense,  
I will walk on the main road and my only fear  
will be of straying from it.  
Keeping to the main road is easy,  
But people love to be sidetracked.  
When the court is arrayed in splendor,  
The fields are full of weeds,  
And the granaries are bare.  
Some wear gorgeous clothes,  
Carry sharp swords,  
And indulge themselves with food and drink;  
They have more possessions than they can use.  
They are robber barons.  
This is certainly not the way of Tao.

54

What is firmly established cannot be uprooted.  
What is firmly grasped cannot slip away.  
It will be honored from generation to generation.  
Cultivate Virtue in your self,  
And Virtue will be real.  
Cultivate it in the family,  
And Virtue will abound.  
Cultivate it in the village,  
And Virtue will grow.  
Cultivate it in the nation,  
And Virtue will be abundant.  
Cultivate it in the universe,  
And Virtue will be everywhere.  
Therefore look at the body as body;  
Look at the family as family;  
Look at the village as village;  
Look at the nation as nation;  
Look at the universe as universe.  
How do I know the universe is like this?  
By looking!

55

He who is filled with Virtue is like a newborn child.  
Wasps and serpents will not sting him;  
Wild beasts will not pounce upon him;  
He will not be attacked by birds of prey.  
His bones are soft, his muscles weak,  
But his grip is firm.  
He has not experienced the union of man and woman, but is whole.  
His manhood is strong.  
He screams all day without becoming hoarse.  
This is perfect harmony.  
Knowing harmony is constancy.  
Knowing constancy is enlightenment.  
It is not wise to rush about.  
Controlling the breath causes strain.  
If too much energy is used, exhaustion follows.  
This is not the way of Tao.  
Whatever is contrary to Tao will not last long.

56

Those who know do not talk.  
Those who talk do not know.  
Keep your mouth closed.  
Guard your senses.  
Temper your sharpness.  
Simplify your problems.  
Mask your brightness.  
Be at one with the dust of the Earth.  
This is primal union.  
He who has achieved this state  
Is unconcerned with friends and enemies,  
With good and harm, with honor and disgrace.  
This therefore is the highest state of man.

57

Rule a nation with justice.  
Wage war with surprise moves.  
Become master of the universe without striving.  
How do I know that this is so?  
Because of this!  
The more laws and restrictions there are,  
The poorer people become.  
The sharper men's weapons,  
The more trouble in the land.  
The more ingenious and clever men are,  
The more strange things happen.  
The more rules and regulations,  
The more thieves and robbers.  
Therefore the sage says:  
I take no action and people are reformed.  
I enjoy peace and people become honest.  
I do nothing and people become rich.  
I have no desires and people return to the good and simple life.

58

When the country is ruled with a light hand  
The people are simple.  
When the country is ruled with severity,  
The people are cunning.  
Happiness is rooted in misery.  
Misery lurks beneath happiness.  
Who knows what the future holds?  
There is no honesty.  
Honesty becomes dishonest.  
Goodness becomes witchcraft.  
Man's bewitchment lasts for a long time.  
Therefore the sage is sharp but not cutting,  
Pointed but not piercing,  
Straightforward but not unrestrained,  
Brilliant but not blinding.

59

In caring for others and serving heaven,  
There is nothing like using restraint.  
Restraint begins with giving up one's own ideas.  
This depends on Virtue gathered in the past.

If there is a good store of Virtue, then nothing is impossible.  
If nothing is impossible, then there are no limits.  
If a man knows no limits, then he is fit to be a ruler.  
The mother principle of ruling holds good for a long time.  
This is called having deep roots and a firm foundation,  
The Tao of long life and eternal vision.

60

Ruling the country is like cooking a small fish.  
Approach the universe with Tao,  
And evil is not powerful,  
But its power will not be used to harm others.  
Not only will it do no harm to others,  
But the sage himself will also be protected.  
They do not hurt each other,  
And the Virtue in each one refreshes both.

61

A great country is like low land.  
It is the meeting ground of the universe,  
The mother of the universe.  
The female overcomes the male with stillness,  
Lying low in stillness.  
Therefore if a great country gives way to a smaller country,  
It will conquer the smaller country.  
And if a small country submits to a great country,  
It can conquer the great country.  
Therefore those who would conquer must yield,  
And those who conquer do so because they yield.  
A great nation needs more people;  
A small country needs to serve.  
Each gets what it wants.  
It is fitting for a great nation to yield.

62

Tao is source of the ten thousand things.  
It is the treasure of the good man, and the refuge of the bad.  
Sweet words can buy honor;  
Good deeds can gain respect.  
If a man is bad, do not abandon him.  
Therefore on the day the emperor is crowned,  
Or the three officers of state installed,  
Do not send a gift of jade and a team of four horses,  
But remain still and offer the Tao.  
Why does everyone like the Tao so much at first?  
Isn't it because you find what you seek and are forgiven when you sin?  
Therefore this is the greatest treasure of the universe.

63

Practice non-action.  
Work without doing.  
Taste the tasteless.  
Magnify the small, increase the few.  
Reward bitterness with care.  
See simplicity in the complicated.  
Achieve greatness in little things.  
In the universe the difficult things are done as if they are easy.  
In the universe great acts are made up of small deeds.

The sage does not attempt anything very big,  
And thus achieved greatness.  
Easy promises make for little trust.  
Taking things lightly results in great difficulty.  
Because the sage always confronts difficulties,  
He never experiences them.

64

Peace is easily maintained;  
Trouble is easily overcome before it starts.  
The brittle is easily shattered;  
The small is easily scattered.  
Deal with it before it happens.  
Set things in order before there is confusion.  
A tree as great as a man's embrace springs up from a small shoot;  
A terrace nine stories high begins with a pile of earth;  
A journey of a thousand miles starts under one's feet.  
He who acts defeats his own purpose;  
He who grasps loses.  
The sage does not act, and so is not defeated.  
He does not grasp and therefore does not lose.  
People usually fail when they are on the verge of success.  
So give as much care to the end as to the beginning;  
Then there will be no failure.  
Therefore the sage seeks freedom from desire.  
He does not collect precious things.  
He learns not to hold on to ideas.  
He brings men back to what they have lost.  
He help the ten thousand things find their own nature,  
But refrains from action.

65

In the beginning those who knew the Tao did not try to enlighten others,  
But kept it hidden.  
Why is it so hard to rule?  
Because people are so clever.  
Rulers who try to use cleverness  
Cheat the country.  
Those who rule without cleverness  
Are a blessing to the land.  
These are the two alternatives.  
Understanding these is Primal Virtue.  
Primal Virtue is deep and far.  
It leads all things back  
Toward the great oneness.

66

Why is the sea king of a hundred streams?  
Because it lies below them.  
Therefore it is the king of a hundred streams.  
If the sage would guide the people, he must serve with humility.  
If he would lead them, he must follow behind.  
In this way when the sage rules, the people will not feel oppressed;  
When he stands before them, they will not be harmed.  
The whole world will support him and will not tire of him.  
Because he does not compete,  
He does not meet competition.

67

Everyone under heaven says that my Tao is great and beyond compare.  
Because it is great, it seems different.  
If it were not different, it would have vanished long ago.  
I have three treasures which I hold and keep.  
The first is mercy; the second is economy;  
The third is daring not to be ahead of others.  
From mercy comes courage; from economy comes generosity;  
From humility comes leadership.  
Nowadays men shun mercy, but try to be brave;  
They abandon economy, but try to be generous;  
They do not believe in humility, but always try to be first.  
This is certain death.  
Mercy brings victory in battle and strength in defense.  
It is the means by which heaven saves and guards.

68

A good soldier is not violent.  
A good fighter is not angry.  
A good winner is not vengeful  
A good employer is humble.  
This is known as the Virtue of not striving.  
This is known as ability to deal with people.  
This since ancient times has been known as the ultimate unity with heaven.

69

There is a saying among soldiers:  
I dare not make the first move but would rather play the guest;  
I dare not advance an inch but would rather withdraw a foot.  
This is called marching without appearing to move,  
Rolling up your sleeves without showing your arm,  
Capturing the enemy without attacking,  
Being armed without weapons.  
There is no greater catastrophe than underestimating the enemy.  
By underestimating the enemy, I almost lost what I value.  
Therefore when the battle is joined,  
The underdog will win.

70

My words are easy to understand and easy to perform,  
Yet no man under heaven knows them or practices them.  
My words have ancient beginnings.  
My actions are disciplined.  
Because men do not understand, they have no knowledge of me.  
Those that know me are few;  
Those that abuse me are honored.  
Therefore the sage wears rough clothing and holds the jewel in his heart.

71

Knowing ignorance is strength.  
Ignoring knowledge is sickness.  
If one is sick of sickness, then one is not sick.  
The sage is not sick because he is sick of sickness.  
Therefore he is not sick.

72

When men lack a sense of awe, there will be disaster.  
Do not intrude in their homes.



Do not harass them at work.  
If you do not interfere, they will not weary of you.  
Therefore the sage knows himself but makes no show,  
Has self-respect but is not arrogant.  
He lets go of that and chooses this.

73

A brave and passionate man will kill or be killed.  
A brave and calm man will always preserve life.  
Of these two which is good and which is harmful?  
Some things are not favored by heaven. Who knows why?  
Even the sage is unsure of this.  
The Tao of heaven does not strive, and yet it overcomes.  
It does not speak, and yet is answered.  
It does not ask, yet is supplied with all its needs.  
It seems to have no aim and yet its purpose is fulfilled.  
Heaven's net casts wide.  
Though its meshes are coarse, nothing slips through.

74

If men are not afraid to die,  
It is no avail to threaten them with death.  
If men live in constant fear of dying,  
And if breaking the law means that a man will be killed,  
Who will dare to break the law?  
There is always an official executioner.  
If you try to take his place,  
It is like trying to be a master carpenter and cutting wood.  
If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter, you will only hurt your hand.

75

Why are the people starving?  
Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes.  
Therefore the people are starving.  
Why are the people rebellious?  
Because the rulers interfere too much.  
Therefore they are rebellious.  
Why do the people think so little of death?  
Because the rulers demand too much of life.  
Therefore the people take death lightly.  
Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.

76

A man is born gentle and weak.  
At his death he is hard and stiff.  
Green plants are tender and filled with sap.  
At their death they are withered and dry.  
Therefore the stiff and unbending is the disciple of death.  
The gentle and yielding is the disciple of life.  
Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.  
A tree that is unbending is easily broken.  
The hard and strong will fall.  
The soft and weak will overcome.

77

The Tao of heaven is like the bending of a bow.  
The high is lowered, and the low is raised.  
If the string is too long, it is shortened;  
If there is not enough, it is made longer.

The Tao of heaven is to take from those who have too much and give to those who do not have enough.

Man's way is different.

He takes from those who do not have enough and give to those who already have too much.

What man has more than enough and gives it to the world?

Only the man of Tao.

Therefore the sage works without recognition.

He achieves what has to be done without dwelling on it.

He does not try to show his knowledge.

78

Under heaven nothing is more soft and yielding than water.

Yet for attacking the solid and strong, nothing is better;

It has no equal.

The weak can overcome the strong;

The supple can overcome the stiff.

Under heaven everyone knows this,

Yet no one puts it into practice.

Therefore the sage says:

He who takes upon himself the humiliation of the people is fit to rule them.

He who takes upon himself the country's disasters deserves to be king of the universe.

The truth often sounds paradoxical.

79

After a bitter quarrel, some resentment must remain.

What can one do about it?

Therefore the sage keeps his half of the bargain

But does not exact his due.

A man of Virtue performs his part,

But a man without Virtue requires others to fulfill their obligations.

The Tao of heaven is impartial.

It stays with good men all the time.

80

A small country has fewer people.

Though there are machines that can work ten to a hundred times faster than man, they are not needed.

The people take death seriously and do not travel far.

Though they have boats and carriages, no one uses them.

Though they have armor and weapons, no one displays them.

Men return to the knotting of rope in place of writing.

Their food is plain and good, their clothes fine but simple, their homes secure;

They are happy in their ways.

Though they live within sight of their neighbors,

And crowing cocks and barking dogs are heard across the way,

Yet they leave each other in peace while they grow old and die.

81

Truthful words are not beautiful.

Beautiful words are not truthful.

Good men do not argue.

Those who argue are not good.

Those who know are not learned.

The learned do not know.

The sage never tries to store things up.

The more he does for others, the more he has.

The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance.

The Tao of heaven is pointed but does no harm.  
The Tao of the sage is work without effort.



LAO TZU



EMPORER FU HSI



CHANG SAN-FENG





The Classics are generally cited as the authoritative source on Tai Chi Chuan principles by Yang, Wu and other styles that have branched off from the original Chen Family and Cheng San-feng schools of Tai Chi Chuan. The authenticity of any documents prior to Yang Lu-chan (1799-1872 A.D.) is questioned, and there appears to be a sense among some Chen stylists that the attribution of some of the Classics to historical figures was an attempt by early practitioners to avoid giving full credit for the development of Tai Chi Chuan to the Chen Family. There is apparently a tradition in Chinese writing to attribute works to ancients, so questions about authenticity cannot be discounted. The Classics frequently use mystic terminology from Tai Chi Chuan's philosophical roots in Taoism and traditional Chinese medicine. For the beginner, the use of these specialized terms may seem to compound the difficulty of understanding some concepts. After long study and practice, however, it eventually becomes clear that there is no English language vocabulary for expressing some of the important ideas for moving towards mastery in Tai Chi Chuan. Borrowing terms from Tao Chinese may actually be less cumbersome than trying to translate their meaning into the English language. Sometimes a passage will refer to the practice of the Solo Form, sometimes to martial application, and sometimes to the internal aspects of the art. Not every passage necessarily relates to all aspects of Tai Chi Chuan.



## THE SIX HARMONIES

Attributed to Chen Hsi-I (871 – 989 A.D.)

### Inner Six Harmonies

The inner harmonies are six sequential steps or levels of achievement. They are always present in one's practice, though the premature focus of one inevitably leads to the loss of another.

#### 1. Body and Mind Combine

The body moves when it is told to do so by the mind. Therefore the mind controls the movements of the body, even though it may not necessarily be aware of what is happening. As the body transitions from movement to movement it must become aware of all motions and micro-movements that occur.

#### 2. Mind and Intent Combine

The mind tells the body to move but not necessarily for what purpose. The movements must be understood as one must intend to do something with the motions. Once so then the intention will take over and dictate what comes out.

#### 3. Intent and Chi Combine

As intent strengthens the mind and body will relax and chi will begin to flow. Chi follows intent, it goes where the mind tells it to go, providing the mind and body are relaxed as tension (mental and physical) inhibits chi.

#### 4. Chi and Spirit Combine

As the chi is refined (flow and intensity) the spirit comes forth. This may be known as emotional content, which can be more destructive than creative (to one's progress) if introduced/realized too early.

#### 5. Spirit and Movement Combine

With the spirit (emotion) present it begins to determine what will happen. Techniques will differ if one fights aggressively or mercifully, so the emotion will dictate the action.

#### 6. Movement and Emptiness Combine

Combining with emptiness means to be omnipotent, or more tangibly said means to go beyond the physical, mental, and spiritual by unifying them. It takes great effort to become effortless. This is a humble aim rather than an arrogant goal and only becomes possible if one follows the proper path.

### Outer Six Harmonies

The outer harmonies are methods and clarifications of the application of the Nine Joint Power. When one thing moves, all move; when one thing stops, all stop. All the main joints must start together and stop together in harmony.

#### 1. Body and Joints Combine

The three joints of the body (torso) are the cervical spine (neck), thoracic spine (upper back) and the lumbar spine (lower back). These 3 joints must move together in harmony with each other.

#### 2. Arm and Joints Combine

The three joints of the arm are the shoulder, elbow and wrist. These 3 joints must move together projecting from the core to the extremity.

#### 3. Leg and Joints Combine

The three joints of the leg are the hip, knee and ankle. These 3 joints must move together projecting from the core to the extremity.

#### 4. Hands and Feet Combine

The movement of the hands tracks the movement of the feet. Directional focus of intent!

#### 5. Elbows and Knees Combine

The movement of the elbows tracks the movement of the knees. Transfer of force!

#### 6. Shoulders and Hips Combine

The movement of the shoulders tracks the movement of the hips. Spinal stabilization!

## THE EIGHT METHODS

Attributed to Chen Hsi-I (871 – 989 A.D.)

### 1. Qi

The Qi works internally as an energy source which circulates your blood. Qi emanates from an area called the Dantien, located about 1.5 inches below the navel. The Dantien is the source of energy from which all movement springs, and lies dormant within everybody until it's activated by constant practice. Since Spirit guides all our movement, spirit assists the movement of our Qi. Qi without spirit is inactive. Show the spirit in your eyes and in all your movements. Have the spirit of the dragon and you will move like the dragon.

### 2. Bone

The internal force (jing) is concealed within the bones and joints. It's the nature of this internal force to come forth suddenly when needed and then to subside. The internal work is more forceful if we move from our legs with the body coordinated. If in the beginning we practice the proper way to root ourselves, then in the advanced stage, our internal work will be very forceful.

### 3. Feature

From the time we learn our first movement, as well as the acquisition of each successive movement, it's very important to practice properly. Each movement should be clearly distinguished from the others. In the advanced stage the movements are smoothed into a circle and continuous so there is no separation.

### 4. Follow

In pushing hands we use stick and follow. Without anticipating your partner's move you lightly stick with their every movement. Immediately yielding to oncoming force yet leaving no room for them to advance. In this manner we can thoroughly understand our partner's intentions -- how they wish to attack. Your touch should be so light they should never know what you are up to.

### 5. Rise

Your head is held as if suspended from above, yet relaxed. Remember, the principles of Taiji are the same as those which guide the Yi Qing. The two trigrams which compose a given hexagram in the Yi Qing are composed of three liens each. The top line is always represented as heaven, the bottom line is earth, and the middle line is man. Man must maintain his balance between heaven and earth. In Taiji your head corresponds to the top line, always moving as if through the heavens. In this manner, the circulation of Qi moves from the base of the spine to the back of the head, then down the front of the body back to the Dantien, like a river returning to the sea.

### 6. Return

To maintain an even balance, a movement in one direction is directly related to its opposite. Return means balance between substantial and insubstantial movement. This is the balance of Yin/Yang. Our legs work like a bow, and our advance and retreat should be controlled from the waist by the spine. Our back and arms should be rounded. Inside and outside should be circulated with qi. To and Fro, advance and retreat train us to move in Yin/Yang. We should have both hard and soft, empty and solid at the same time. In maintaining the balance between Yin/Yang there is a constant shift in our movements.

### 7. Restrain

The mind should be calm, maintaining an inner void. Don't mind how fierce your opponent is or whatever move is made. Calm your mind, don't allow yourself to be disturbed. Calmly watch your opponent with an inner void. This calmness gives you the idea you will need to meet the attack; any attack the instant it comes your way.

### 8. Conceal

The inner force is concealed until it is needed. After you have practiced enough, you will reach an advanced state: you will have an inner force concealed within your bones which the attacker cannot see, but you know is there. Conceal the inner force. Do not reveal it until it is needed. When needed, release it like an arrow, suddenly and with surprise.

## T'AI CHI CH'UAN CHING

Attributed to Chang San-Feng (1391 – 1459 A.D.)

In motion the whole body should be light and agile,  
with all parts of the body linked  
as if threaded together.  
The ch'i [vital life energy] should be excited,  
The shen [spirit of vitality] should be internally gathered.  
The postures should be without defect,  
without hollows or projections from the proper alignment;  
in motion the Form should be continuous, without stops and starts.  
The chin [intrinsic strength] should be  
rooted in the feet,  
generated from the legs,  
controlled by the waist, and  
manifested through the fingers.  
The feet, legs, and waist should act together  
as an integrated whole,  
so that while advancing or withdrawing  
one can grasp the opportunity of favourable timing  
and advantageous position.  
If correct timing and position are not achieved,  
the body will become disordered  
and will not move as an integrated whole;  
the correction for this defect  
must be sought in the legs and waist.  
The principle of adjusting the legs and waist  
applies for moving in all directions;  
upward or downward,  
advancing or withdrawing,  
left or right.  
All movements are motivated by I [mind-intention],  
not external form.  
If there is up, there is down;  
when advancing, have regard for withdrawing;  
when striking left, pay attention to the right.  
If the I wants to move upward,  
it must simultaneously have intent downward.  
Alternating the force of pulling and pushing  
severs an opponent's root  
so that he can be defeated  
quickly and certainly.  
Insubstantial and substantial  
should be clearly differentiated.  
At any place where there is insubstantiality,  
there must be substantiality;  
Every place has both insubstantiality and substantiality.  
The whole body should be threaded together  
through every joint  
without the slightest break.  
Chang Ch'uan [Long Boxing] is like a great river  
rolling on unceasingly.  
Peng, Lu, Chi, An,  
Ts'ai, Lieh, Chou, and K'ao



are equated to the Eight Trigrams.  
The first four are the cardinal directions;  
Ch'ien [South; Heaven],  
K'un [North; Earth],  
K'an [West; Water], and  
Li [East; Fire].  
The second four are the four corners:  
Sun [Southwest; Wind],  
Chen [Northeast; Thunder],  
Tui [Southeast; Lake], and  
Ken [Northwest; Mountain].  
Advance (Chin), Withdraw (T'ui),  
Look Left (Tso Ku), Look Right (Yu Pan), and  
Central Equilibrium (Chung Ting)  
are equated to the five elements:  
Metal,  
Wood,  
Water,  
Fire, and  
Earth

## **TREATISE ON T'AI CHI CH'UAN** **Attributed to Wang Tsung-Yueh (1733 – 1795 A.D.)**

T'ai Chi [Supreme Ultimate] comes from Wu Chi [Formless Void]  
and is the mother of yin and yang.  
In motion T'ai Chi separates;  
in stillness yin and yang fuse and return to Wu Chi.  
It is not excessive or deficient;  
it follows a bending, adheres to an extension.  
When the opponent is hard and I am soft,  
it is called tsou [yielding].  
When I follow the opponent and he becomes backed up,  
it is called nian [sticking].  
If the opponent's movement is quick,  
then quickly respond;  
if his movement is slow,  
then follow slowly.  
Although there are innumerable variations,  
the principles that pervades them remain the same.  
From familiarity with the correct touch,  
one gradually comprehends chin [intrinsic strength];  
from the comprehension of chin one can reach wisdom.  
Without long practice  
one cannot suddenly understand T'ai Chi.  
Effortlessly the chin reaches the headtop.  
Let the ch'i [vital life energy] sink to the tan-t'ien [field of elixir].  
Don't lean in any direction;  
suddenly appear,  
suddenly disappear.  
Empty the left wherever a pressure appears,  
and similarly the right.

If the opponent raises up, I seem taller;  
if he sinks down, then I seem lower;  
advancing, he finds the distance seems incredibly long;  
retreating, the distance seems exasperatingly short.  
A feather cannot be placed,  
and a fly cannot alight  
on any part of the body.  
The opponent does not know me;  
I alone know him.  
To become a peerless boxer results from this.  
There are many boxing arts.  
Although they use different forms,  
for the most part they don't go beyond  
the strong dominating the weak,  
and the slow resigning to the swift.  
The strong defeating the weak  
and the slow hands ceding to the swift hands  
are all the results of natural abilities  
and not of well-trained techniques.  
From the sentence "A force of four ounces deflects a thousand pounds"  
we know that the technique is not accomplished with strength.  
The spectacle of an old person defeating a group of young people,  
how can it be due to swiftness?  
Stand like a perfectly balanced scale and  
move like a turning wheel.  
Sinking to one side allows movement to flow;  
being double-weighted is sluggish.  
Anyone who has spent years of practice and still cannot neutralize,  
and is always controlled by his opponent,  
has not apprehended the fault of double-weightedness.  
To avoid this fault one must distinguish yin from yang.  
To adhere means to yield.  
To yield means to adhere.  
Within yin there is yang.  
Within yang there is yin.  
Yin and yang mutually aid and change each other.  
Understanding this you can say you understand chin.  
After you understand chin,  
the more you practice,  
the more skill.  
Silently treasure knowledge and turn it over in the mind.  
Gradually you can do as you like.  
Fundamentally, it is giving up yourself to follow others.  
Most people mistakenly give up the near to seek the far.  
It is said, "Missing it by a little will lead many miles astray."  
The practitioner must carefully study.  
This is the Treatise

## COMMENTARY ON THE T'AI CHI CH'UAN CLASSIC Yang Lu-Chang (1799 – 1872 A.D.)

As soon as one moves,  
The entire body should light and sensitive,  
And all its parts connected.  
The Ch'i should be aroused  
And the spirit gathered within.  
Do not allow gaps;  
Do not allow bulges or hollows;  
Do not allow discontinuities.  
The root is in the feet,  
Energy issues through the legs,  
Is controlled by the waist  
And is expressed in the hands and fingers.  
From the feet to the legs to the waist  
Should be one complete flow of chi.  
One will then be able to seize opportunities  
And occupy the superior position.  
If one is unable to seize opportunities  
And gain the superior position,  
The body will be scattered and in confusion.  
Look for the weakness in the waist and in the legs.  
The same is true for above and below,  
Front and back, right and left.  
All of this has to do with the mind and not externals.  
If there is an above, there must be a below;  
If there is a fore, there must be a rear;  
And if there is a left there must be a right.  
If the intention is to rise,  
Pay attention to below.  
If you want to lift something,  
You must apply breaking power.  
In this way its roots will be severed,  
And its destruction will be swift and inevitable.  
Full and empty should be clearly distinguished.  
Any given point has the potential for full or empty,  
And the whole body has this dual aspect;  
Full and empty.  
All the joints of the body should be connected  
Without permitting the slightest break

## EXPOSITIONS OF INSIGHTS INTO THE PRACTICE OF THE THIRTEEN POSTURES Wu Yu-Hsiang (1812 – 1880 A.D.)

The hsin [mind-and-heart] mobilizes the ch'i [vital life energy].  
Make the ch'i sink calmly;  
then the ch'i gathers and permeates the bones.  
The ch'i mobilizes the body.  
Make it move smoothly, so that it may easily follow the hsin.  
The I [mind-intention] and ch'i must interchange agilely,  
then there is an excellence of roundness and smoothness.  
This is called "the interplay of insubstantial and substantial."

The hsin is the commander, the ch'i the flag, and the waist the banner.  
 The waist is like the axle and the ch'i is like the wheel.  
 The ch'i is always nurtured without harm.  
 Let the ch'i move as in a pearl with nine passages  
 without breaks  
 so that there is no part it cannot reach.  
 In moving the ch'i sticks to the back and permeates the spine.  
 It is said "First in the hsin, then in the body."  
 The abdomen relaxes, then the ch'i sinks into the bones.  
 The shen [spirit of vitality] is relaxed and the body calm.  
 The shen is always in the hsin.  
 Being able to breathe properly leads to agility.  
 The softest will then become the strongest.  
 When the ching shen is raised,  
 there is no fault of stagnancy and heaviness.  
 This is called suspending the headtop.  
 Inwardly make the shen firm,  
 and outwardly exhibit calmness and peace.  
 Throughout the body, the I relies on the shen,  
 not on the ch'i.  
 If it relied on the ch'i, it would become stagnant.  
 If there is ch'i, there is no li [external strength].  
 If not focused on ch'i, there is pure steel.  
 The chin [intrinsic strength] is sung [relaxed], but not sung;  
 it is capable of great extension, but is not extended.  
 The chin is broken, but the I is not.  
 The chin is stored (having a surplus) by means of the curved.  
 The chin\* is released by the back,  
 and the steps follow the changes of the body.  
 The mobilization of the chin is like refining steel a hundred times over.  
 There is nothing hard it cannot destroy.  
 Store up the chin like drawing a bow.  
 Mobilize the chin like drawing silk from a cocoon.  
 Release the chin like releasing the arrow.  
 To fa-chin [discharge energy],  
 sink,  
 relax completely,  
 and aim in one direction!  
 In the curve seek the straight,  
 store,  
 then release.  
 Be still as a mountain,  
 move like a great river.  
 The upright body must be stable and comfortable  
 to be able to sustain an attack from any of the eight directions.  
 Walk like a cat.  
 Remember, when moving, there is no place that does not move.  
 When still, there is no place that is not still.  
 First seek extension, then contraction;  
 then it can be fine and subtle.  
 It is said if the opponent does not move, then I do not move.  
 At the opponent's slightest move, I move first."  
 To withdraw is then to release,  
 to release it is necessary to withdraw.

In discontinuity there is still continuity.  
In advancing and returning there must be folding.  
Going forward and back there must be changes.  
The Form is like that of a falcon about to seize a rabbit,  
and the shen is like that of a cat about to catch a rat.

## **FIVE CHARACTER SECRET**

**Li I-Yu (1832 – 1882 A.D.)**

### **Calm**

The hsin [mind-and-heart] should be calm. If the hsin is not calm, one cannot concentrate, and when the arm is raised, whether forward or back, left or right, it is completely without certain direction. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain a calm mind. In beginning to move, you cannot control (it) by yourself. The entire mind must also experience and comprehend the movements of the opponent. Accordingly, when the movement bends, it then straightens, without disconnecting or resisting. Do not extend or retreat by yourself. If my opponent has li [external strength], I also have li, but my li is previous in exact anticipation of his. If the opponent does not have li, I am also without li, but my I [mind-intent] is still previous. It is necessary to be continually mindful; to whatever part of the body is touched the mind should go. You must discover the information by non-discrimination and non-resistance. Follow this method, and in one year, or a half-year, you will instinctively find it in your body. All of this means you use I, not chin [intrinsic force]. After a practicing for a long time, the opponent will be controlled by me and I will not be controlled by him.

### **Agility**

If the body is clumsy, then in advancing or retreating it cannot be free; therefore, it must be agile. Once you raise your arm, you cannot appear clumsy. The moment the force of my opponent touches my skin and hair, my mind is already penetrating his bones. When holding up the arms, the ch'i [vital life energy] is threaded together continuously. When the left side is heavy, it then empties, and the right side is already countering. When the right is heavy, it empties, and the left is already countering. The ch'i is like a wheel, and the whole body must mutually coordinate. If there is any uncoordinated place, the body becomes disordered and weak. The defect is to be found in the waist and legs. First the mind is used to order the body. Follow the opponent and not your own inclination. Later your body can follow your mind, and you can control yourself and still follow the opponent. When you only follow your own inclination, you are clumsy, but when you follow the opponent, then your hands can distinguish and weigh accurately the amount of his force, and measure the distance of his approach with no mistake. Advancing and retreating, everywhere the coordination is perfect. After studying for a long time, your technique will become skillful.

### **Breath**

If the ch'i is dispersed, then it is not stored and is easy to scatter. Let the ch'i penetrate the spine and the inhalation and exhalation be smooth and unimpeded throughout the entire body. The inhalation closes and gathers, the exhalation opens and discharges. Because the inhalation can naturally raise and also uproot the opponent, the exhalation can naturally sink down and also fa-chin [discharge energy] him. This is by means of the I, not the li mobilizing the ch'i.

### **Internal Force**

The chin of the whole body, through practice, becomes one unit. Distinguish clearly between substantial and insubstantial. To fa-chin it is necessary to have root. The chin starts from the foot, is commanded by the waist, and manifested in the fingers, and discharged through the spine and back. One must completely raise the shen [spirit of vitality] at the moment when the opponent's chin is about to manifest, but has not yet been released. My chin has then already met his, not late, not early. It is like using a leather (tinder) to start a fire, or like a fountain

gushing forth. In going forward or stepping back, there is not even the slightest disorder. In the curve seek the straight, store, then discharge; then you are able to follow your hands and achieve a beautiful result. This is called borrowing force to strike the opponent or using four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds.

### **Spirit**

Having the above four, then you can return to concentrated spirit: if the spirit is concentrated, then it is continuous and uninterrupted, and the practice of ch'i returns to the shen [spirit of vitality]. The manifestation of ch'i moves with agility. When the shen is concentrated, opening and closing occur appropriately, and the differentiation of substantial and insubstantial is clear. If the left is insubstantial, the right is substantial, and vice-versa. Insubstantial does not mean completely without strength. The manifestation of ch'i must be agile. Substantial does not mean completely limited. The spirit must be completely concentrated. It is important to be completely in the mind [I] and the waist, and not outside. Not being outside or separated, force is borrowed from the opponent, and the ch'i is released from the spine. How can the ch'i discharge from the spine? It sinks downward from the two shoulders, gathers to the spine, and pours to the waist. This is ch'i from up to down and is called closed. From the waist the ch'i mobilizes to the spine, spreads to the two arms and flows to the fingers. This is ch'i from down to up and is called opened. Closed is gathering, and opened is discharging. When you know opening and closing, then you know yin and yang. Reaching this level your skill will progress with the days and you can do as you wish.

## **ESSENTIALS OF THE PRACTICE OF THE FORM AND PUSH HANDS**

**Li I-Yu (1832 – 1882 A.D.)**

Formerly people said: "being able to attract to emptiness, you can use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds." Not being able to attract to emptiness, you cannot deflect a thousand pounds. The words are simple, but the meaning is complete. The beginner cannot understand it. Here I add some words to explain it. If someone is ambitious to learn this art, he can find some way to enter it and every day he will have some improvement. Desiring to attract to emptiness and deflect a thousand pounds, first you must know yourself and others. If you want to know yourself and others, you must give up yourself and follow others. If you give up yourself and follow others, first you must have the correct timing and position. To obtain the correct timing and position, you must first make your body one unit. Desiring to make the body one unit, you must first eliminate hollows and protuberances. To make the whole body without breaks or holes, you must first have the shen [spirit of vitality] and ch'i [vital life energy] excited and expanded. If you want the shen and ch'i activated and expanded, you must first raise the spirit (pay attention) and the shen should not be unfocussed. To have your shen not unfocussed, you must first have the shen and ch'i gather and penetrate the bones. Desiring the shen and ch'i to penetrate the bones, first you must strengthen the two thighs and loosen the two shoulders and let the ch'i sink down. The chin [intrinsic strength] raises from the feet, changes in the legs, is stored in the chest, moved in the shoulders and commanded in the waist. The upper part connects to the two arms and the lower part follows the legs. It changes inside. To gather is to close and to release is to open. If it is quiet, it is completely still. Still means to close. In closing there is opening. If it is moving, everything moves. Moving is open. In opening there is closing. When the body is touched it revolves freely. There is nowhere that does not obtain power. Then you can attract to emptiness and use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds. Practicing the Form every day is the kung fu of knowing yourself. When you start to practice, first ask yourself, "Did my whole body follow the above principles or not?" If one little place did not follow them, then correct it immediately. Therefore, in practicing the Form we want slowness not speed. Push hands is the kung fu of knowing others. As for movement and stillness, although it is to know others, you must still ask yourself. If you arrange yourself well, when

others touch you, you don't move a hair. Follow the opportunity and meet his chin and let him fall naturally outward. If you feel someplace in your body is powerless, it is double-weighted and unchanging. You must seek the defect in yin and yang, opening and closing. Know yourself and know others: in one hundred battles you will win one hundred times.

## YANG'S TEN IMPORTANT POINTS

Yang Cheng-Fu (1883 – 1936A.D.)

- 1.) Head upright to let the shen [spirit of vitality] rise to the top of the head. Don't use li [external strength], or the neck will be stiff and the ch'i [vital life energy] and blood cannot flow through. It is necessary to have a natural and lively feeling. If the spirit cannot reach the headtop, it cannot raise.
- 2.) Sink the chest and pluck up the back. The chest is depressed naturally inward so that the ch'i can sink to the tan-t'ien [field of elixir]. Don't expand the chest: the ch'i gets stuck there and the body becomes top-heavy. The heel will be too light and can be uprooted. Pluck up the back and the ch'i sticks to the back; depress the chest and you can pluck up the back. Then you can discharge force through the spine. You will be a peerless boxer.
- 3.) Relax the waist. The waist is the commander of the whole body. If you can sun the waist, then the two legs will have power and the lower part will be firm and stable. Substantial and insubstantial change, and this is based on the turning of the waist. It is said "the source of the postures lies in the waist. If you cannot get power, seek the defect in the legs and waist."
- 4.) Differentiate between insubstantial and substantial. This is the first principle in T'ai Chi Ch'uan. If the weight of the whole body is resting on the right leg, then the right leg is substantial and the left leg is insubstantial, and vice versa. When you can separate substantial and insubstantial, you can turn lightly without using strength. If you cannot separate, the step is heavy and slow. The stance is not firm and can be easily thrown of balance.
- 5.) Sink the shoulders and drop the elbows. The shoulders will be completely relaxed and open. If you cannot relax and sink, the two shoulders will be raised up and tense. The ch'i will follow them up and the whole body cannot get power. "Drop the elbows" means the elbows go down and relax. If the elbows raise, the shoulders are not able to sink and you cannot discharge people far. The discharge will then be close to the broken force of the external schools.
- 6.) Use the mind instead of force. The T'ai Chi Ch'uan Classics say, "all of this means use I [mind-intent] and not li." In practicing T'ai Chi Ch'uan the whole body relaxes. Don't let one ounce of force remain in the blood vessels, bones, and ligaments to tie yourself up. Then you can be agile and able to change. You will be able to turn freely and easily. Doubting this, how can you increase your power? The body has meridians like the ground has ditches and trenches. If not obstructed the water can flow. If the meridian is not closed, the ch'i goes through. If the whole body has hard force and it fills up the meridians, the ch'i and the blood stop and the turning is not smooth and agile. Just pull one hair and the whole body is off-balance. If you use I, and not li, then the I goes to a place in the body and the ch'i follows it. The ch'i and the blood circulate. If you do this every day and never stop, after a long time you will have nei chin [real internal strength]. The T'ai Chi Ch'uan Classics say, "when you are extremely soft, you become extremely hard and strong." Someone who has extremely good T'ai Chi Ch'uan kung fu has arms like iron wrapped with cotton and the weight is very heavy. As for the external schools, when they use li, they reveal li. When they don't use li, they are too light and floating. Their chin is external and locked together. The li of the external schools is easily led and moved, and not too be esteemed.
- 7.) Coordinate the upper and lower parts of the body. The T'ai Chi Ch'uan Classics say "the motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, controlled by the waist and



manifested through the fingers." Everything acts simultaneously. When the hand, waist and foot move together, the eyes follow. If one part doesn't follow, the whole body is disordered.

8.) Harmonize the internal and external. In the practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan the main thing is the shen. Therefore it is said "the spirit is the commander and the body is subordinate." If you can raise the spirit, then the movements will naturally be agile. The postures are not beyond insubstantial and substantial, opening and closing. That which is called open means not only the hands and feet are open, but the mind is also open. That which is called closed means not only the hands and feet are closed, but the mind is also closed. When you can make the inside and outside become one, then it becomes complete.

9.) Move with continuity. As to the external schools, their chin is the Latter Heaven brute chin. Therefore it is finite. There are connections and breaks. During the breaks the old force is exhausted and the new force has not yet been born. At these moments it is very easy for others to take advantage. T'ai Chi Ch'uan uses I and not li. From beginning to end it is continuous and not broken. It is circular and again resumes. It revolves and has no limits. The original Classics say it is "like a great river rolling on unceasingly." and that the circulation of the chin is "drawing silk from a cocoon " They all talk about being connected together.

10.) Move with tranquility [Seek stillness in movement]. The external schools assume jumping about is good and they use all their energy. That is why after practice everyone pants. T'ai Chi Ch'uan uses stillness to control movement. Although one moves, there is also stillness. Therefore in practicing the form, slower is better. If it is slow, the inhalation and exhalation are long and deep and the ch'i sinks to the tan-t'ien. Naturally there is no injurious practice such as engorgement of the blood vessels. The learner should be careful to comprehend it. Then you will get the real meaning.

## SONG OF FORM AND FUNCTION Cheng Man-Ching (1902 – 1975 A.D.)

Tai Chi Chuan, the thirteen postures.  
The marvel lies in the two chi divided into Yin and Yang.  
It transforms the myriad and returns to the one.  
Returns to the One, Tai Chi Chuan.  
The Liang I (2 powers) and the Four Manifestations are chaos and boundless.  
To ride the winds suspend the head top.  
I have some words to reveal to those who can understand.  
If the Yung ch'uan has no root and the waist has no commander,  
studying hard until death will be of no use.  
The form and function are mutually connected and nothing more.  
The Universal Chi can be conducted to the hand.  
Peng, Lu, Chi, An, Tsai, Liea, Jou, Kow (13 postures).  
Advance, retreat, look left, look right, central equilibrium.  
Not neutralizing it naturally neutralizes, not yielding it naturally yields.  
Before you advance, shift backward.  
The body is like a floating cloud.  
In Tuishou the hands are not needed.  
The whole body is a hand, the hand is not a hand.  
But the mind must stay in the tan tien.



### THE DREAM OF THE BUTTERFLY

It was a cool evening in ancient China. Chuang Tzu's friend went looking for him at the local inn. He found Chuang Tzu sitting at a table, sipping his drink in a contemplative mood.

"There you are!" Chuang Tzu's friend greeted him. "I thought by now you would be telling everybody another one of your stories. Why so quiet?"

"There is a question on my mind," said Chuang Tzu, "a question about existence."

"I see. Would you like me to leave you alone to your thoughts?"

"No, let me share it with you. Perhaps you can provide me with your perspective."

"My perspective is of little value, but I would be glad to listen." He pulled up a chair.

"I was out for a stroll late in the afternoon," said Chuang Tzu. "I went to one of my favorite spots under a tree. I sat there, thinking about the meaning of life. It was so warm and pleasant that I soon relaxed, dozed off, and drifted into a dream. In my dream, I found myself flying up above the field. I looked behind me and saw that I had wings. They were large and beautiful, and they fluttered rapidly. I had turned into a butterfly! It was such a feeling of freedom and joy, to be so carefree and fly around so lightly in any way I wished. Everything in this dream felt absolutely real in every way. Before long, I forgot that I was ever Chuang Tzu. I was simply the butterfly and nothing else."

"I've had dreams of flying myself, but never as a butterfly," Chuang Tzu's friend said. "This dream sounds like a wonderful experience."

"It was, but like all things, it had to end sooner or later. Gradually, I woke up and realized that I was Chuang Tzu after all. This is what puzzles me."

"What is so puzzling about it? You had a nice dream, that's all there is to it."

"What if I am dreaming right now? This conversation I am having with you seems real in every way, but so did my dream. I thought I was Chuang Tzu who had a dream of being a butterfly. What if I am a butterfly who, at this very moment, is dreaming of being Chuang Tzu?"

"Well, I can tell you that you are actually Chuang Tzu, not a butterfly."

Chuang Tzu smiled: "You may simply be part of my dream, no more or less real than anything else. Thus, there is nothing you can do to help me identify the distinction between Chuang Tzu and the butterfly. This, my friend, is the essential question about the transformation of existence."

Many philosophers and students of the Tao feel that of all the stories ever told by Chuang Tzu, this is the one that best captures his essence. There is so much agreement on this that the butterfly has come to represent Chuang Tzu in Chinese culture. But what is so special about this story? It seems rather short and simple, so why do people consider it to be so important?

One thing that sages have observed about the world is that many people talk too much but convey little that is meaningful. The Tao seems to be the opposite in that it says nothing and yet expresses everything. The sages occupy a position between the two in that they speak concisely but convey a world of wisdom. This characteristic applies to Chuang Tzu and this story as well - it may not seem to say much, and yet embedded within it are four important lessons for us to ponder.

#### First Lesson: Oneness

By connecting himself with the butterfly, Chuang Tzu is pointing out that all living things are united by the life force within them. The drive to survive and thrive in us is the very same drive that also exists in everything from the largest creatures to the smallest insects.

When we recognize this, we can begin to see ourselves as part of nature rather than apart from nature.

Chuang Tzu has chosen the butterfly deliberately to emphasize this point. In terms of appearance, the butterfly seems as different from a human being as anything can be. Nevertheless, at a fundamental level it is exactly like us - a manifestation of life, and therefore of the Tao, in the material world.

If we can say that about a butterfly, then we can say that about anything. Therefore, one of the most basic truths in the world is that all are one.

### **Second Lesson: Life is Like a Dream**

Chuang Tzu also points out in this story that a dream can seem every bit as real as our waking existence. All the sights and sounds, feelings and emotions in the dream can be just as vivid and intense as our experience in reality.

This lesson is an exercise in detachment in two areas of life: emotional obsessions and material obsessions. The key to this lesson is the realization that if we can see how dreams can seem completely real, then we can also see how reality can be just like a dream.

We can become emotionally obsessive when we interact with others. Sometimes people say positive things about us and we grasp onto their compliments and approval; sometimes they say negative things instead and we cling to the destructive feelings of taking offense or being attacked.

Let us use the negative side as an example. Suppose someone has said something that you find extremely hurtful and insulting, and you become angry. You wish to regain your tranquility, but your anger makes it impossible. What to do?

Step one: recall to mind Chuang Tzu's equivalence between dream-state and reality. If you experience the insult in a dream, you would feel just as hurt, offended and angry.

Step two: realize that you already have a natural ability to deal with it. If the event occurred in a dream, you would simply shrug it off upon awakening. It's only a dream; everything's okay. We have all done this before. We are all experts in dealing with bad dreams.

Step three: apply this natural ability to deal with your negative emotions. Although the event has actually occurred and isn't a dream, your emotional reactions to it are, again, exactly identical. This basic equivalence gives you the leverage to manage your rage. Handle the negativity as if it is the result from a nightmare, and reflect on how in some ways this is literally true. Soon you'll discover letting the anger go is not so impossible after all.

### **Third Lesson: Awakening Awareness**

Becoming fully awake is a powerful metaphor in spiritual cultivation. The word "buddha" literally means someone who has become fully awakened. Compared to this true state of wakefulness, our everyday consciousness resembles sleep, and everything we consider real in life turns out to have no more reality than a dream that fades into nothingness.

This may be difficult to understand. After all, at this very moment you probably feel very much awake. Why would anyone say you are asleep when you know you aren't?

The truth is that almost everyone operates at a low level of awareness most of the time. Consider the last time you locked a door, walked away, and then had to go back to double-check because you couldn't be sure you actually locked it. Or, think of the last time you walked into a room and couldn't remember why you went in there. Were you looking for something? If so, what was it? Chances are you had to retrace your steps just to reconnect with your original intent.

If you've ever had experiences similar to the above, then you already understand Chuang Tzu's point. As we go through the motions in day-to-day existence, we seem to be sleepwalking most of the time. Once in a while we have a moment of clarity, like a sleeper awakening just enough to check the alarm clock, and then we go right back into slumber.

How can we become more fully awake? This is something that requires persistent effort. Tao cultivators who focus on this aspect of life would consistently practice being present. Through diligent repetition, they develop the habit to always ask themselves "What exactly am I doing right now?" and "What exactly is going on around me right now?" People who do this invariably make surprising discoveries. They catch themselves doing things that make little sense, or they suddenly become aware of something significant and obvious that somehow eluded their notice before. The more they practice this, the better they get at it, and being in the moment becomes a more natural and much more frequent occurrence.

#### **Fourth Lesson: Transformation**

The last lesson from Chuang Tzu is also the most important. The butterfly in the story is crucial, because it represents joyous freedom - a liberating state of spirituality where one transcends fears, just like the butterfly flying free of the limitations imposed by gravity. A Tao cultivator who achieves this freedom becomes an unbounded individual, not held back by emotional or material attachments that tie most people down.

The transformation that Chuang Tzu speaks of in this story, in conjunction with the butterfly, form a powerful imagery that represents the complete process of Tao cultivation. We start out making slow progress, learning one lesson after another, just like the caterpillar crawling slowly, eating its way through leaves.

After sufficient accumulation of knowledge over a period of time, the mind begins processing the information to extract wisdom for the soul. This is a time of meditation, reflection and quietude, much like the fully grown caterpillar going into the chrysalis stage.

Then, the magical metamorphosis begins. Miniature wings, almost imperceptible, expand rapidly to become much larger. A spectacular transformation takes place, and the stunning creature that emerges from the chrysalis bears no resemblance to its former self. The child has become the adult.

In the same way, someone who goes through the metamorphosis of the Tao has become a new person. The Tao cultivator has transformed into a sage. The wings of spirituality have expanded to become much larger, much more colorful and beautiful.

Now we can see even more clearly that Chuang Tzu chose the butterfly with careful deliberation. It is also quite obvious now why the butterfly has come to represent Chuang Tzu in Chinese culture. Every piece of the puzzle fits together so well that it simply cannot be any other way.

Is Chuang Tzu telling us with this story that we all have the potential to turn into the butterfly?

Yes, but not without going through the larval and pupal stages. To jump directly into the butterfly stage can only be a dream that soon comes to an end. If you encounter people who claim to be enlightened, be especially cautious, because in all likelihood they are merely caterpillars no different from you and me. They may be convinced they are the butterfly, but that's because they are dreaming.

What Chuang Tzu has given us is a glimpse of what we can achieve through Tao cultivation. If we have patience, diligence and faith as we seek and consume nutritious leaves, then the day will come when we go into the chrysalis and eventually emerge from it. That is when we will know... that the joyous freedom of the butterfly is no longer a dream!

## **THE WATERFALL**

Confucius and his students went on a hike out in the countryside. He was thinking of using the opportunity to engage the students in a discussion about the Tao when one of them approached and asked: "Master, have you ever been to Liu Liang? It is not far from here."

Confucius said: "I have heard about it but never actually seen it with my own eyes. It is said to be a place of much natural beauty."

"It is indeed," the student said. "Liu Liang is known for its majestic waterfalls. It is only about two hours' trek from here, and the day is still young. Master, if you would like to go there, I would be honored to serve as your guide."

Confucius thought this was a splendid idea, so the group set off toward Liu Liang. As they were walking and chatting, another student said: "I grew up near a waterfall myself. In summertime, I would always go swimming with the other children from the village."

The first student explained: "These waterfalls we will see aren't quite like that. The water comes down from such a great height that it carries tremendous force when it hits the bottom. You definitely would not want to go swimming there."

Confucius said: "When the water is sufficiently powerful, not even fish and turtles can get near it. This is interesting to ponder, because we are used to thinking of water as their native element."

After a while, they could see the waterfall coming into view in the hazy distance. Although it was still far away, they could see that it was indeed as majestic as the first student described. Another hour of walking brought them even closer, and now they could clearly hear the deep, vibrating sound it made.

They topped a rise and were able to see the entire waterfall. Then they gasped collectively, because at the bottom of it, they saw a man in the ferociously churning water, being spun around and whipped this way and that by the terrifying currents.

"Quickly, to the waterfall!" Confucius commanded. "He must have fallen in by accident, or perhaps he is a suicide. Either way, we must save him if we can."

They ran as fast as they could. "It's useless, Master," one of the students said. "By the time we get down there, he'll be too far gone for us to do him any good."

"You may well be right," Confucius replied. "Nevertheless, when a man's life is at stake, we owe it to him to make every effort possible."

They lost sight of the man as they descended the hillside. Moments later, they broke through the forest to arrive at the river, a short distance downstream from the waterfall. They expected to see the man's lifeless body in the river. Instead, they saw him swimming casually away from the waterfall, spreading his long hair out and singing loudly, evidently having a great time. They were dumbfounded.

When he got out of the river, Confucius went to speak with him: "Sir, I thought you must be some sort of supernatural being, but on closer inspection I see you are an ordinary person, no different from us. We sought to save you, but now I see it is not necessary."

The man bowed to Confucius: "I am sorry if I have caused you any grave concerns on my behalf. This is merely a trivial recreational activity I enjoy once in a while."

Confucius bowed back: "You say it is trivial, but to me it is incredible. How can it be that you were not harmed by the waterfall? Are there some special skills that you possess?"

"No, I have no special skills whatsoever," the man replied. "I simply follow the nature of the water. That's how I started with it, developed a habit out of it, and derived lifelong enjoyment from it."

"This 'follow the nature of the water' - can you describe it in greater detail? How exactly does one follow the nature of water?"

"Well... I don't really think about it very much. If I had to describe it, I would say that when the powerful torrents twist around me, I turn with them. If a strong current drives me down, I dive alongside it. As I do so, I am fully aware that when we get to the riverbed, the current will reverse course and provide a strong lift upward. When this occurs, I am already anticipating it, so I rise together with it."

"So you are working with the water and not just letting it have its way with you?"

"That's right. Although the water is extremely forceful, it is also a friend that I have gotten to know over the years, so I can sense what it wants to do, and I leverage its flow without trying to manipulate it or impose my will on it."

"How long did it take for you to make all this an integrated part of your life?"

"I really can't say. I was born in this area, so the waterfalls have always been a familiar sight to me. I grew up playing with these powerful currents, so I have always felt comfortable with

them. Whatever success I have with water is simply a natural result of my lifelong habit. To be quite frank, I have no idea why this approach works so well. To me, it's just the way life is." Confucius thanked him and turned back to his students. He smiled, because he suddenly knew exactly what they could talk about on their trip home.

This is one of Chuang Tzu's many stories featuring Confucius in a central role. It depicts Confucius as a wise teacher and a humble student of the Tao. This may come as a bit of a surprise, because sometimes we come across the notion that Chuang Tzu uses such stories to ridicule and criticize Confucius. The more we study Chuang Tzu, the more we see that this is just another one of the many misconceptions about the Tao.

A true sage would have little need to ridicule or criticize anyone, and 2,500 years ago there were no such labels as Taoism or Confucianism. All the masters including Chuang Tzu and Confucius studied the Tao, and in that pursuit they learned from one another with mutual courtesy and respect. It was only later generations that started rivalries, disregarding the teaching of harmony and straying far from the Tao.

In this story, the majestic waterfall of Liu Liang represents life. The fearsome force of this waterfall represents the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that we withstand in life. The water carries so much power that there is nothing one can do to stop it or slow it down. In the same way, sometimes we feel ourselves propelled along by the progression of events, heading toward a certain outcome and completely powerless to avoid it. The sheer force of fate, like the waterfall, can be overwhelming.

Some people who study the Tao at the superficial level like to say that we all live in the Tao and can never be apart from it, so everything is already perfect as it is. With the waterfall imagery, Chuang Tzu points out the error in this way of thinking. While we are indeed immersed in the Tao like fish in water, that water is not necessarily tranquil. Because life is dynamic and constantly changing, it can often push us in unexpected directions. In this way it is much more similar to the chaotic currents of the waterfall.

Most of us attempt to survive the waterfall of life with limited success. Sometimes the water slams us against rocks or tosses us around like rag dolls. Sometimes we try to fight the water, but the effort is draining, and soon we are exhausted. We rail against such injustices, but no amount of rage seems to make any difference.

Then, just like Confucius witnessing the man emerging from the river without a scratch, sometimes we see a few people who, unlike most of us, seem to handle life with effortless ease. Strangely, the mighty current of misfortune does not have the same effect on them as it does on us. When they come out of this current, we can see that they have suffered no harm or fatigue. Not only that, but they actually seem to be having fun! How can this be?

The man in the waterfall represents the sage who has mastered the art of living life to the utmost. Such is his mastery that his skills have become completely natural to him. They go far beyond "techniques" or "strategies" that one can learn from self-improvement books; they become totally integrated with his instincts and reactions.

There are two major elements in the sage's mastery. The first is perceptive awareness. Just as the man in the waterfall follows the nature of the water, the sage is keenly aware of his environment and the forces at work in it. He brings observations and insights to the present moment to understand exactly what is going on. This means he does not merely "let go" in living the Taoist life - that would only be yet another misconception - instead, he is actively interested in his surroundings and curious about current events. This is how he follows the nature of life.

The second major element is proactive involvement. Once the sage understands the direction and velocity of a life current, he works with it. Rather than to let himself be thrown around by the current, he rides it. Just as the man in the waterfall sees water as a friend and knows where it wants to go, the sage embraces life and intuitively senses its tendencies and inclinations. Thus, rather than to fight the tremendous power of the water, the sage leverages that same power to his own benefit.

Some of the currents drive us downward. Such currents represents setbacks in life, and we all encounter them from time to time. The sage's understanding of the Tao informs him that no current can sustain the downward push forever. Sooner or later, it must reach an extreme and turn back around. Those who are able to anticipate this, like the sage, can take advantage of the upward movement; those who cannot, may very well miss the opportunity.

How can we learn to become masters of the waterfall, or expert surfers riding the waves of life? Chuang Tzu tells us that first we must get to know life and become familiar with its many currents. As we become increasingly comfortable, we should start practicing with them while remaining observant and sensitive to changing conditions. When the currents change direction or speed, we must adjust ourselves to match.

The most important direction from Chuang Tzu is that we need to make a lifelong habit out of this practice. This is because the Tao is not a passive or inactive pursuit. Instead, it is full of vitality and dynamism, and embodies an action orientation. Therefore, mastery of life cannot happen all by itself without proactive involvement on our part.

How long will it take for us to gain this mastery? Chuang Tzu cannot tell us, because it really depends on the individual. Some of us may need an entire lifetime to master life itself.

We do know one thing for sure though, and that is if we take proactive steps to start developing the habit as Chuang Tzu suggests - in other words, cultivate the Tao in a consistent daily practice - then we, like the man in the waterfall, will also find ourselves enjoying every minute of it!

## THE THIEF AND HIS SON

To explain the study of Zen and Tao, the Fifth Patriarch told this story:

"The Zen we have here is like an old thief who led his son into a mansion and instructed him to go into a walk-in closet to steal some clothes. As soon as the son went into the closet, the father closed the door and locked him in. He then ran through the hallway banging on doors and walls, making a loud racket before fleeing into the night.

"The residents got up, looked around and realized that there might still be a thief in the house. They banded together, lit a candle, and started searching room by room.

"The son, still trapped in the closet, was in a bad situation. Out of desperation, he made mouse noises, which attracted the searchers' attention. The master of the mansion ordered his servant to unlock the closet. The young man sprang out, blew out the candle, pushed the servant aside, and ran for his life. The residents regrouped and gave angry pursuit.

"The young man couldn't shake them, but suddenly he saw a well up ahead and got an idea. He pushed a large rock into the well, and ran in a different direction. The residents heard the loud splash, assumed he fell in or jumped in the well, and went looking for him there.

"Thanks to this ploy, the young man was able to get away cleanly. He returned home to tell his father what happened. After he completed his report, his father said, 'You're ready to be a thief now.'"

The main point is that ultimately, Zen and Tao are concepts for each person to grasp individually. A student of Zen and Tao is like the young man in this story, and the master is like the father. A true master will provide a certain amount of guidance and lead the student along the path to a personal trial. For every piece of wisdom one gains, there is a corresponding trial which takes place in one's heart as well as the mind.

When you undergo this process, you start out just like the young man, trapped, alone and in the dark. The lock that keeps you trapped isn't a physical lock. Rather, it represents an

obstacle to comprehension, and you need the key of insight to unlock it. In this critical juncture, it is entirely up to you to make a breakthrough. No one can help you.

Now why is that? By the above we have described the process, but not the reason. Why is this something that you must do by your lonesome?

By their very nature, Zen and Tao are highly personal. If someone were to explain them to you, all you'll get is a version of his understanding, expressed through the imperfect medium of his words. It still won't be your own understanding, because something is always lost in the transition, and his understanding is tied to his intuitions and perceptions, which are not and can never be your intuitions and perceptions.

The only way to make Zen and Tao uniquely your own is to find a way out of this maze in the heart and make your escape to realization and oneness. During this mental flight, your pursuers are the forces of ignorance and misconception, and when you succeed in getting away from them, understanding dawns, and a light bulb comes on in your mind. You experience that golden "eureka" moment and win another piece of the Truth.

That's what the study of Zen and Tao is all about - personal breakthroughs leading to personal enlightenment. In the context of our story today, it's all about qualifying to be a thief... which, in turn, means taking another step toward becoming a true master.

## THE WHEEL MAKER

One day, King Huan was reading a book while an old craftsman was busy making wheels over in a corner. The old man noticed that the book seemed to capture the King's complete attention. He grew increasingly curious about this, and after a while decided to approach.

"Your Majesty, forgive me for intruding," the old man said. "What is this book that you are studying so diligently?"

"This is no ordinary book," the King said, holding it up with great respect. "It is written by a wise sage."

The old man asked: "Is this sage still alive, Your Majesty?"

The King shook his head. "No, he passed away a long time ago."

"Oh, I see," the old man nodded. Then, without thinking, he added: "In that case, what Your Majesty is reading would simply be the leftovers of a dead man."

This struck the King as incredibly insulting. "What is this?" His anger flared. "You are nothing more than a lowly craftsman. Is it your place to comment on what I wish to read? Explain the reasoning of your statement and I may let you live. If you fail to do so, I shall have your head."

The old man replied: "Your Majesty, it is exactly as you say: I am but a humble craftsman. I know nothing except the art of making wheels. Permit me to explain myself to you using this little bit of knowledge that I have."

This response surprised the King. To him, making wheels and reading books could not be further apart. Had the old man lost his mind due to fear? King Huan was puzzled, but his interest was piqued. "Go on," he said.

"Your Majesty, in my line of work, the hole in the center is of supreme importance. It must fit the axle just right. If I make it too big, the wheel will slip right off and become useless. If it is only slightly too big, then the wheel will seem to stay on, but after a short while of actual usage on the roads, it will loosen and fall off the axle, quite possibly causing great damage to the carriage in the process.

"On the other hand, it is also possible to make the hole too small. In that case, when I force the axle into it, I may very well split the wheel in two, thus wasting hours of effort. If it is only slightly too small, then it may appear to be a secure fit, but after a short while of actual usage, the wheel will crack and break apart, again causing possible harm to the carriage and even the passengers within.



"Therefore, one secret of my trade is to know the right way to make the hole. But making the hole just right, not too big and not too small, requires years of non-stop practice. This experience gives me a feeling that guides my hand. It is a feeling I have learned to trust, for it is never wrong.

"The other secret of my trade has to do with the roundness of the wheel. If I chisel away at the wheel too quickly, I may be able to complete the work in a short time, but the wheel won't be perfectly round. Even though it may look quite acceptable upon casual inspection, in actual usage it will cause excessive shaking of the carriage. The ride will be extremely uncomfortable, and the wheel will damage itself beyond repair in a matter of days.

"Of course, I can chisel slowly and carefully. This guarantees a perfectly round wheel, but it will also take so much time to complete that Your Majesty would have to wait many years before we can assemble the royal fleet of carriages. Clearly, this would not be acceptable.

"In order to create the best wheels possible in a timely manner, I must chisel at just the right speed - not too fast and not too slow. This speed is also guided by a feeling, which again can only be acquired through many years of experience. With this feeling, I can be perfectly composed and unhurried when I make my wheels, but still complete the project on time.

"I can teach the mechanics of wheel making to anyone. It is easy to create something that looks like a wheel, but quite difficult to make wheels that are durable, safe, and provide a smooth ride. I can explain all of this to my son, but it is impossible for me to give him the feeling that is at the heart of the wheel making art. He must gain that on his own. This is why I am seventy years old and still making wheels.

"Your Majesty, the ancient sages possessed the feelings that were at the heart of their mastery. Using words, they could set down the mechanics of their mastery in the form of books, but just as it is impossible for me to pass on my experience to anyone else, it is equally impossible for them to transmit their essence of wisdom to you. Their feelings died when they passed away. The only things they left behind were their words. This is why I said Your Majesty was reading the leftovers of a dead man."

King Huan was stunned and speechless. Slowly, he lowered his hand and set the book down.

Chuang Tzu is making several points with this one story. The primary point is that books are filled with dead, static knowledge, while the Tao is all about the vibrant, dynamic wisdom of life. If we look for the Tao in books, we won't find it anywhere; if we look for the Tao in life, we will find it everywhere.

Chuang Tzu's secondary point, equally important, is about moderation. There are two aspects of moderation that Chuang Tzu delves into, and the first has to do with quantities and amounts - things that can be measured in some way. The Wheel Maker explained that the hole in the center of the wheel must not be too big or too small. In the same way, we discover as we go through life that both excess and lack tend to be negative. We want things to be just right - not too much and not too little.

Mass production techniques did not exist in ancient China, so each axle to be fitted with wheels was slightly different in size. This meant the Wheel Maker had to match each set of wheels for a particular axle. Dimensions that fit one axle perfectly may be completely off for another.

It is the same with life. There are no standard amounts that are appropriate for everyone in every situation. Each individual is different, so what one person considers perfect may be completely unacceptable to another. For instance, temperature that I consider moderate may be too hot or too cold for someone else. It all depends.

As the Wheel Maker pointed out, sometimes less skillful craftsmen would force an axle into a hole that was not quite large enough. This resulted in damage to the wheel, either immediately or after some wear and tear.

This idea applies in many different areas in life. If we force ourselves to overeat when we are already full, we end up damaging the body. If we force friends to listen to us when they really don't want to, we end up damaging the friendship. Even if nothing seems broken,

that doesn't mean everything is okay. The damage may not be easy to spot, like hairline cracks in a wooden wheel that can split apart at any moment.

Another aspect of moderation has to do with the process of getting things done. The Wheel Maker figured out the right speed to chisel, so he could do his work in a way that was effective and yet perfectly calm and composed. This meant he was in tune with the Tao and could progress at the natural pace and rhythm of the task at hand.

The same concept applies to us as we get things done in life. Oftentimes we make the mistake in thinking faster is better, so we try to work as quickly as possible. We push ourselves to do more in less time, and in the mad rush we make mistakes, forget details, and stress ourselves out.

A good friend once told me of a fond memory from her childhood. Every Sunday morning, her entire family would get ready for church. Everyone would be rushing to get dressed and have breakfast; the whole household would be in complete disarray. When her grandmother saw this, she would say: "Let's slow down so we can get there faster."

This may sound like a paradox, but is in fact great wisdom. Our problem in the modern world is usually going too fast, so slowing down brings us back to moderation. We need to keep this in mind because life seems to be full of due dates, deadlines, and tasks that are "urgent" but not necessarily important. These things become stress factors and build up tension. We force ourselves through them, thinking we are "productive" while unable to see the hairline fractures that are spreading through the wheel of life. At some point, things start falling apart, and we wonder where we went wrong.

How can we know the right speed with which to proceed? There is no magic formula. The only way to discover the natural rhythm and pace of the Tao is through experience. By living life with awareness, we can feel the most appropriate speed in any given situation. This is the same feeling that the Wheel Maker was talking about. No one can teach it to you; it is something you need to learn on your own.

This is why we say the Tao is experiential. As Lao Tzu also points out, although the Tao is fundamental to our existence, it cannot be spoken of or named with words. It must be lived, experienced... and above all it must be felt.

How can we tell that this Tao is aligned with moderation? By simple observation. One characteristic of the Tao is that it is everlasting. Therefore, when we observe positive results that last, we can be certain that they come from actions that are congruent with the Tao.

To the Wheel Maker, a positive, lasting result meant a wheel that rolled smoothly and was so durable that it could provide many years of trouble-free service. Moderation is responsible for creating this excellent result. Therefore, it must be moderation and not extremism that mirrors the Tao.

The final point by Chuang Tzu may not be easy to see. It is a point that returns full circle to connect the pursuit of knowledge with moderation. It is important for us to emphasize because it was never Chuang Tzu's intention to denigrate learning - only the immoderate and dogmatic pursuit of knowledge. When we are too obsessive with books, we tend to become arrogant and lose sight of practical, everyday reality.

The Wheel Maker's message for King Huan was not to completely discard books. Such a message would certainly not be in accordance with moderation. The Wheel Maker pointed out the importance of feelings and experience, and the fact that they could not be found in books. His unspoken advice to the King was to seek the proper balance, to absorb not just book knowledge but also life knowledge.

This message applies to us too. As we study the hidden lessons in Chuang Tzu's story, let us also make sure we are not neglecting the valuable lessons that life has to offer. And as we go forth to experience these lessons, let us bring along moderation as our ever-present and everlasting companion. We will use the Tao to learn the Tao!

CARVING UP AN OX BY CHUANG TZU  
TRANSLATION BY DEREK LIN

A cook was butchering an ox for Duke Wen Hui.  
The places his hand touched,  
His shoulder leaned against,  
His foot stepped on,  
His knee pressed upon,  
Came apart with a sound.  
He moved the blade, making a noise  
That never fell out of rhythm.  
It harmonized with the Mulberry Woods Dance,  
Like music from ancient times.  
Duke Wen Hui exclaimed: "Ah! Excellent!  
Your skill has advanced to this level?"  
The cook puts down the knife and answered:  
"What I follow is Tao,  
Which is beyond all skills.  
"When I started butchering,  
What I saw was nothing but the whole ox.  
After three years,  
I no longer saw the whole ox.  
"Nowadays, I meet it with my mind  
Rather than see it with my eyes.  
My sensory organs are inactive  
While I direct the mind's movement.  
"It goes according to natural laws,  
Striking apart large gaps,  
Moving toward large openings,  
Following its natural structure.  
"Even places where tendons attach to bones  
Give no resistance,  
Never mind the larger bones!  
"A good cook goes through a knife in a year,  
Because he cuts.  
An average cook goes through a knife in a month,  
Because he hacks.  
"I have used this knife for nineteen years.  
It has butchered thousands of oxen,  
But the blade is still like it's newly sharpened.  
"The joints have openings,  
And the knife's blade has no thickness.  
Apply this lack of thickness into the openings,  
And the moving blade swishes through,  
With room to spare!  
"That's why after nineteen years,  
The blade is still like it's newly sharpened.  
"Nevertheless, every time I come across joints,  
I see its tricky parts,  
I pay attention and use caution,  
My vision concentrates,  
My movement slows down.  
"I move the knife very slightly,  
Whump! It has already separated.

The ox doesn't even know it's dead,  
and falls to the ground like mud.  
"I stand holding the knife,  
And look all around it.  
The work gives me much satisfaction.  
I clean the knife and put it away."  
Duke Wen Hui said: "Excellent!  
I listen to your words,  
And learn a principle of life."

## THE AXE

The emissary returned to the palace and reported that he completed his routine task of message delivery to the neighboring kingdoms. "Excellent," the king approved. "While you were traveling, did you see or hear about anything interesting?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Many days ago, in the Kingdom of Ying, I stopped at a country inn to have supper and saw a most extraordinary martial arts demonstration.

"The inn was undergoing renovation, so there were many workers around. One of them, an old carpenter, was a bit careless and got some lime on his nose. It was just a tiny bit of lime, as thin as the wing on a fly. But still, it was unsightly and distracting. I thought he would simply wipe it off, but he called out to one of the masons and said, 'Hey, want to practice your special skill?'

"The mason said, 'Sure!' He looked happy as he brought out a large axe. He hefted it and waved it around. I saw this and could not help but wonder - what were these two planning to do with such a fearsome weapon?

"After a few more practice swings, he asked the carpenter: 'Ready?'

"The carpenter smiled casually and replied, 'Whenever you are.' He seemed completely at ease, which only increased my puzzlement and curiosity.

"The mason concentrated and suddenly swung the axe. I jumped, completely surprised, because I thought he would surely chop his friend's head off.

"The carpenter did not move at all. The axe passed right in front of him. The lime was gone but his nose was completely unharmed. His expression was composed, his breathing was normal, and he seemed just as relaxed as before.

"I could not believe it, Your Majesty. I had never witnessed such an amazing display of axe wielding skill."

"Incredible!" The king exclaimed. "I want you to find the mason and bring him to me. I must see this for myself."

The emissary embarked on his new mission. He returned to the country inn and found the mason. After some effort and persistence, he was able to talk the mason into returning to the palace with him.

As soon as they reached the palace, the emissary took the mason to the king. "You must be the legendary axe master," the king said. "I have heard about your special skill. You are able to remove a thin coating of lime from another man's nose without harming him. Is this true?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. I have practiced that skill for years."

"Excellent," said the king. "I want you to perform it for me. If you can do it, I shall reward you most handsomely."

The mason seemed hesitant: "I am sorry, Your Majesty, I... I cannot do it."

"What? You are not interested in my rewards?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, but I can only do it with my partner, the carpenter."

"Oh, I see. Why didn't you say so? We will simply have to bring him here."

"That is not possible, Your Majesty." There was a note of infinite sadness in the mason's voice.

"My partner has passed away. I am afraid... the special skill... is lost forever."

By now, we have enough experience with Chuang Tzu's stories to realize that this story is also not what it appears to be. Chuang Tzu is once again using symbols and metaphors to describe an essential aspect of humanity.

The axe represents the interaction of human beings. This covers all the different ways we communicate with one another - verbally, physically, mentally, and so on. An easy way for us to understand this is to think of the ax as the words we use.

Just as the axe has sharp edges, our words have the ability to hurt. When we engage each other in conversation, it is as if we are swinging axes around. One wrong move and we can wound someone's pride, offend people inadvertently, or perhaps criticize the other person without meaning to.

For the sake of safety, most of the time we keep our axes covered up. We use polite phrases and politically correct words to wrap around the sharp edges of the axe. Although this works well in social situations, our protective measures can also get in the way when we wish to communicate openly, directly and honestly.

The carpenter called his performance with the mason a special skill. This is because personal communication is imprecise, so it can be very difficult to get it right. Words mean different things to different people at different times, and their intended meaning can be further modified by tonality, gestures and facial expressions. When we think about the many ways misunderstanding can occur, it seems like a miracle that personal communication works at all. And when it does work well, when we achieve nearly perfect understanding with other human beings, it is indeed very special.

This specialness happens when we spend time with good friends and loved ones. In their presence, we can set aside social etiquettes. We can speak plainly and rest easy in the knowledge that our intentions will be completely understood. Just as the mason felt happy and the carpenter felt relaxed as they were getting ready to perform, the mere thought of this comfortable communication is uplifting to the spirit. Think back to the last good conversation you had with someone close to you. Chances are the memory will bring a smile to your lips.

This means we are all like the carpenter and the mason when we connect with the people we care about. A kind of magic happens when we establish rapport and form a direct soul-to-soul connection. Through such a connection, they know what we are thinking and we know their thoughts. They can complete your sentence and you can anticipate what they are about to say. It's almost telepathic, but there is nothing supernatural about it. It's a plain, simple, everyday miracle.

There are three essential ingredients to make this miracle happen. The first is affinity. It is a rare and precious thing that does not automatically manifest itself when you meet someone. For most of us, it is the exception rather than the rule to find others who are in tune with us. When the carpenter passed away, the mason could not find anyone to replace him. In just the same way, those who possess a natural affinity with us play a special role in our lives. If we think we can discard them and easily find someone else, we will be very much mistaken.

The second ingredient is time. It takes time to really get to know someone. The mason and the carpenter have practiced their special skill over many years. In the same way, we need to nurture a friendship or a relationship over the long haul, with much time spent together and many shared experiences. Natural affinity is a good foundation - but it won't do us much good unless we build on it.

The third and most important ingredient is trust. Complete, absolute trust is what the mason and the carpenter demonstrated. The carpenter knew the mason would swing the axe with unfailing accuracy; the mason trusted that the carpenter would not make sudden moves to ruin the performance or hurt himself. In this spirit of trust, both sides must come together.

In the same way, trust is also the most important ingredient in personal communication. If trust is not present, you can exercise the utmost caution in choosing every word carefully and still fail to convey your meaning. If the other party does not trust you, then every word you say is suspect and open to the most negative interpretation, and any attempts to explain or clarify may result in even greater problems.

When trust is present, it trumps everything else. Even when you can't think of the right words and you stutter badly, it doesn't matter. They'll tell you: "It's okay, we know what you mean. We know what you are trying to say." And you realize they actually do - because of the wonderful trust that exists.

The emissary said he could not believe the performance, and the king exclaimed that it was incredible. This represents the improbability of having affinity, time and trust all come together in our interactions with others. If you already have people in your life with whom you share all three ingredients, then you should see them as an almost unbelievable blessing.

What would happen if you were to lose these special people in your life? What would happen if you should lose the magical ingredient of affinity or trust? Just like the mason grieving the passing of his partner, we would also experience a loss of infinite sadness. It would be like an empty void in the heart. We might realize, too late, how joyous it was when there was someone to fill that void. We might regret having taken them for granted.

This is the ultimate message that Chuang Tzu wants to convey with this story: let us not wait until it is too late. Think about your good friends and loved ones. Consider the incredible good fortune to have them in your life and see your deep connection with them for what it truly is - magic.

Let them know how you feel. Tell them how happy you are to be able to relax in their presence; tell them you appreciate being so comfortable and perfectly at ease with them whenever you connect. Thank them for being your partner all these years; thank them for practicing the special skill with you so many times - each time an astounding performance all by itself!

If they haven't read this story, they probably won't know exactly what you are talking about. But that's okay. They will know what you mean. They will know what you are trying to say. And then you will witness this simple understanding... as an incredible miracle of the Tao.

## SECRET FORMULA

It was nearing dusk at a remote village in China. A traveler came along and paused at a house by the river to ask for directions. The man of the house noted the hour was late and insisted that the traveler stay for the evening. The traveler realized that the man practiced traditional hospitality and accepted the generous offer with gratitude.

After dinner, the traveler sat with his host to talk and drink tea. "Pardon my curiosity," the traveler said, "but when I asked you for directions I noticed you were just finishing your work for the day and putting away your tools. What is your business, if I may ask?"

"Oh, certainly," the host replied. "My family specializes in cloth bleaching. We soak textiles in a special bleaching solution, then we take them into the river and use the flowing current to wash away the solution. Old clothes and bed sheets end up looking as good as new."

"That is fascinating," the traveler said. "It's a bit puzzling as well. We are in the middle of winter right now and the weather is cold and dry. Aren't you concerned that wading into the river day after day will

cause your skin to split into painful cracks, thus making it impossible for you to work?"

The cloth bleacher explained: "We are very fortunate in that we have this aromatic ointment that protects us. We apply it in wintertime and it does a great job in preventing the skin from

getting too dry. It allows us to work all year round."

The traveler was very impressed. "I have never heard of such a clever thing! How did you come by this aromatic ointment?"

"Oh, it's a secret formula passed down through the generations. No one else has it, so it gives our business an edge over the competition."

The traveler was thoughtful for a while, and then he spoke up: "I have a proposition for you. I am very interested in this secret formula, and I am willing to pay one hundred gold pieces to buy it from you."

The cloth bleacher was amazed by this offer. Normally, it would take him decades to save up that much money. He excused himself for a quick conference with his family, and then came back to the traveler with a condition: "Sir, I can only sell you the formula if you promise to never give it or sell it to anyone else in the cloth bleaching business."

The traveler made a solemn oath to that effect, and the transaction took place. With much ceremony, the money changed hands, the cloth bleacher brought out the secret formula and made a careful copy.

The traveler resumed his journey the next day, and life returned to normal for the cloth bleacher. He looked at the money and thought it had to be the best deal he ever made.

The traveler went to the palace of King Wu and sought an audience with His Highness. In the royal chambers, he presented the secret formula to the king and explained its function.

King Wu did not understand and asked the traveler: "No doubt this ointment can do what you say it does, but why would we find this to be of any interest?"

"Your Highness, is it not true that you are at war with your neighbor, the state of Yue?"

"That is correct. They are our nemesis. One day we shall conquer them!"

"That day may be closer than you think, Your Highness. Tell me: why exactly do you not attack them now?"

"No one attacks during wintertime. Our two lands are separated by rivers, so any attacks must be over water. In this weather, my soldiers will get frostbite, skin cracking and ... ah."

"Precisely, Your Highness. You now have a way of striking them exactly as you would any other time of the year."

King Wu immediately ordered a large-scale production of the ointment based on the secret formula. It took only a few weeks to get everything ready. Then, he launched the first winter offensive ever. King Yue did not expect this at all and thought King Wu must have gone mad.

Yue soldiers responded to the attack with a counterattack of their own. The two armies met over the bordering river and a fierce battle ensued. The ointment worked as expected and protected Wu soldiers, while Yue soldiers lacked this protection and were fully exposed to the elements. After only a few days of engagement, many Yue soldiers developed such painful cracks that they could not even hold their weapons.

The people in the region were amazed. For as long as they could remember, Wu and Yue had always been equally matched, neither able to gain an inch over the other. Now, somehow King Wu found a way to completely decimate the Yue army, bringing to an end generations of stalemate and unifying the two territories under his rule.

In gratitude to the traveler who played such a pivotal role in his victory, King Wu granted him a large estate and made him a noble. As the traveler settled into the privileged life of a lord, he reflected on the path that took him there. It all started with the secret formula - plus not much more than a hundred gold pieces. It had to be the best deal he ever made.

In this story by Chuang Tzu, the aromatic ointment represents the Tao. Just as the secret formula is passed down from generation to generation, so too are the teachings of the Tao. Today, many people are still not aware of these teaching despite their simplicity, elegance, and effectiveness. Therefore, a genuine tradition of the Tao is still something of a well-kept secret in the modern world.

The ointment can be used to not only bleach cloth but also conquer a powerful enemy, but no matter how you use it, it remains the same - its formula doesn't change. The Tao is

similar. There is more than one way to use it, but no matter how we use it, the Tao remains constant. The crucial element that creates the difference is not the Tao itself. It is you.

Some people regard the Tao as a philosophical pastime or an academic pursuit. Approaching the Tao in such ways is similar to using the ointment for cloth bleaching. While there is nothing wrong with this, Chuang Tzu makes it quite clear that there is a lot more to the ointment than meets the eyes. Similarly, there is a lot more to the Tao that may not be immediately apparent.

In the story, the cloth bleachers are satisfied with the ointment as it is. It gives them an advantage over their competitors, and that's all they want from it. It is the same with the philosophers and scholars. They can derive satisfaction from using the Tao as an intellectual pursuit, so they stop at that and look no further.

Such individuals focus on discussing and reading about the Tao. Some of them regard themselves as experts. To them, the Tao is a hobby that gives them the enjoyment of mental stimulation, Oriental mystique, and perhaps some knowledge from time to time. Lacking any formal guidance, they think they really "get it" when they are only touching the tip of the iceberg.

In reality, the true nature of the Tao goes far beyond the world of the intellect. It is a way of life and a way of being. When we delve deeper into it, we will discover the realm of transformation, where we apply the Tao in every aspect of life. This practical application leads to a gradual, steady and profound change at the innermost level.

In the story, the army that King Wu wields to overcome his longtime rival represents this transformational power. This does not mean that we can use the Tao to dominate others. Instead, Chuang Tzu is using the same metaphor that Lao Tzu uses many times in the Tao Te Ching, where an advice for the king is in fact an instruction to your true self. This makes sense because your true self wields absolute power over your destiny just as the ancient kings of China wielded absolute power over their subjects.

This concept is something that has never made it past the language barrier into the West. Perhaps this is because Tao teachings have largely been translated and presented by those who are not aware of its deeper layers.

The King of Yue represents longstanding problems in your life that you have never been able to resolve. Such problems can be great or small, ranging from harmless procrastination to severe substance abuse. They are the obstacles you have never been able to get past no matter how hard you try.

Applying the ointment to the army represents the application of the Tao to life. The ointment must be used on every soldier. Similarly, the Tao must be applied every day and in every aspect of life. This application must also be consistent and sustained over a period of time, with willpower and discipline.

The overwhelming victory of King Wu represents the miraculous workings of the Tao. The problems that you previously regarded as impossible suddenly fall by the wayside when you apply the Tao. Issues you have never been able to resolve suddenly seem easy. You triumph over your challenges because the Tao has transformed you into a far more effective and powerful individual. The challenges haven't changed, but you have.

Becoming a noble represents the achievement of your goal in life. Having wielded the power of the Tao to gain victory over stubborn problems, you can rightfully enjoy the fruits of your labors. It is a reward you have earned.

As the traveler settles in to a life of luxury, the cloth bleacher continues his work, wading into the river each day to make a meager living. He may not be aware of the dramatic changes that have taken place in the state of Yue, and he still cannot envision leveraging the ointment for any purpose other than his own specific usage.

In just the same way, there is a gulf between those who play at being Tao philosophers and those who rigorously apply the Tao to life. Modern-day "cloth bleachers" typically feel that they don't have to do anything to advance their own understanding of the Tao. They are



secure in their superficial knowledge. Their lives remain stagnant, and nothing changes for the better, while the true cultivators of the Tao continue growing, learning, and living life as an exciting adventure.

One important lesson we can learn from this is that in order to achieve great results, we must think differently and take action. Both ingredients are absolutely essential. The traveler regarded the ointment from a new perspective, and then took action on his insight. He invested a hundred gold pieces and then sought audience with King Wu, after which the army of Wu went through weeks of preparations that took considerable effort and planning. When the soldiers went into battle, they did so with strategy, deployment, and fighting prowess. All of this was necessary to transform the state of Yue into a province of Wu and elevate the traveler from a commoner to nobility.

Chuang Tzu's message is clear: we won't succeed in tilling the field if all we do is turn it over and over again in the mind. Work is a required element. It is not optional. This may come as a surprise to those who, based on a common misconception in the West, imagine that the Tao is all about being relaxed and doing nothing. The truth is more complex and far more interesting.

Another thing we can learn from the story is that the Tao always works no matter what. The ointment works for the soldiers just as well as it does for the cloth bleachers. The Tao is like that. It embodies consistent natural laws that yield predictable results, and it will function the same way for anyone.

It makes no difference to the Tao who you are. As long as you are willing to leverage the ointment to the utmost - apply the Tao to your daily existence - then you, too, can reap the abundant rewards. The most exciting realization is that ultimately it's all up to you. The choice is yours: bleach cloth or become nobility. You are the ruler of your own life and you have the power to decide. You can dabble in the Tao, have fun with it, and be satisfied at that level. Or, you can wield its transformational power to resolve problems, overcome obstacles, and achieve your goals.





## GLOSSARY OF TERMS



**AN:** downward pushing energy; pushing power coming from legs pushing into the earth.

**BAGUA:** See **PA KUA**

**CHANG SAN-FENG:** mythical Shaolin monk and Tai Chi Master regarded as the creator of Tai Chi from a vision where soft/yeilding overcomes hard/strong, (14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)

**CHENG MAN-CHING:** physician, poet, author and renowned master of Tai Chi Chuan, student of Yang Cheng-fu; spread Tai Chi throughout USA and the world (1902-1975 A.D.)

**CHEN WANG-TING:** Ming Dynasty general and legendary Tai Chi master; creator of the Chen style of Tai Chi by combining Shaolin, Daoyin, Qijiguang and Jingluo, (1580-1660 A.D.)

**CHI:** energy of life, universal healing energy, life force, force that fills the universe, animating energy in life, force that binds matter together and connects all that exists; also known as Qi in China, Ki in Japan and Prana in yoga

**CHI KUNG, (QIGONG):** energy exercises for internal strength; natural healing system originating in China around 5,000 B.C. to balance internal energy, promoting vitality, mind expansion and spiritual cultivation; component of Traditional Chinese Medicine

**CHUANG TZU:** legendary founder of Taoism and opposer of Confucius; (300 B.C.)

**CONFUSIUS (KUNG FU TZU):** China's greatest philosopher and teacher (551-479 B.C.)

**CONTEMPLATION MEDITATION:** technique exploring the meaning of nature, spiritual instruction/text, becoming deeply acquainted with it causing a specific state of mind to arise

**DAN TIEN:** elixir of life; chi stored in the abdomen (Lower Dan Tien), solar plexus/heart (Middle Dan Tien), mid-brain (Upper Dan Tien)

**EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE, (BA DUAN JIN):** popular Chi Kung set from ancient China. Eight healing exercises created by Marshal Yue Fei (1127-1279 A.D.) to improve the health and vitality of his soldiers

**EIGHT GATES, (PA KENG):** eight energies; Ward Off, Roll Back, Press, Push, Split, Pluck, Shoulder Strike, Elbow Strike: 8 Tai Chi forms based on energy changes in the Pa Kua; from the Thirteen Original Postures containing the essential movements of Tai Chi Chuan

**FIVE ANIMALS EXERCISES, (WU QIN XI):** 2,000 years old medical Chi Kung set created in the Han Dynasty by Hau Tuo (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.) imitating the movements and spirit of the Crane, Bear, Deer, Tiger, and Monkey to build inner strength, vitality and longevity

**FIVE ELEMENTS, (WU XING):** philosophy of Tao sub-dividing Yin and Yang into five basic elements: earth, wood, fire, water, metal, the Five Elements are always changing and transforming, supporting and destroying each other

**FIVE STEPS, (FIVE GATES):** Advance, Retreat, Gaze Left, Gaze Right, Central Equilibrium; The five directional movements from the Original Thirteen Postures of Chang San-Feng relating to five elemental phases of change

**FORMS, (SOLO FORMS, HAND FORMS):** a series of slow rhythmic and harmonic body movements with great emphasis on posture and balance, based on the study of animal movements and the concept of Yin and Yang; originally developed as a martial art but were quickly recognized as being beneficial to the body and mind; often practised solely for health as well as self-defense; each form is practised over and over again until perfected; the ancient masters used to hold each form for 20 slow abdominal breaths (Lower Dan Tien Meditation) in order to fully understand the depth of each energy, trigram and movement, forms are then linked together with transitions or linking steps to create a recognisable sequence. Each form is integrated into an overall sequence of precise, controlled movements. Solo Forms promote health in a relaxed manner without jarring or hurting one's body, requiring a high degree of concentration with the mind free of distractions

**FOUR CARDINAL DIRECTIONS (SI ZHENG):** the four basic directions in Pa Kua, North South East and West from which the four cardinal energies Peng, Lu, Ji, An are derived.

**FOUR CORE MOVEMENTS, (GRASP THE BIRD'S TAIL):** four fundamental moves found in all style as Tai Chi: Ward Off; Roll Back; Press; Push and their corresponding internal

energies found in the Pa Kua: Peng, Lu, Ji, An

**HUA TUO:** leading Chinese physician in the Han Dynasty, famous for his advanced surgical techniques and creation of the Five Animals Chi Kung. (Han Dynasty 25-220 A.D.)

**I CHING, (YI JING):** 'Book of Changes'(origin unknown 1000 B.C.); classical text on the philosophy and wisdom of Tao ancient manual for divining the future based on 64 energies (hexagrams) found in the universe; its basic premises are simple 1. All the world changes, 2. Change is driven by impersonal forces that can be seen in terms of Yin and Yang, 3. All change is cyclical

**Ji:** pressing and receiving energy; offensive force delivered by following the opponent's energy by squeezing or sticking forward

**JING:** essence, highly concentrated chi stored in the kidneys; Ping Jing is the mother of all internal energy

**KUNG FU (GONGFU):** Energy and Time; any study, learning or practice that requires patience, energy and time to complete; Chinese Martial Arts are commonly called Kung Fu

**LAO TZU:** legendary founder of Taoism & contributing author of 'Tao Te Ching' (600 B.C.)

**LAO GONG:** energy centre in the palms and feet, used for giving and receiving chi

**LI I YU:** famous Wu (Hau) style Tai Chi master, physician and scholar, wrote several books on Tai Chi Chuan that contributed to the Tai Chi Chuan Classics, (1832-1882 A.D.)

**LU:** receiving and collecting energy, inward receiving energy to redirect the momentum of the opponent

**LIEH TZU:** legendary founder of Taoism and philosopher of Tao training (400 B.C.)

**MERIDIANS:** energy channels in the body along which chi flows, including Governing and Functional

**MINDFULNESS:** awareness, quality of the mind that notices what is happening in the present moment and without attachment

**ORIGINAL THIRTEEN POSTURES:** ancient martial art sequence containing the essential forms of Tai Chi created by Chang San-feng, based on the Eight Trigrams and Five Elements, divided into the Eight Gates and Five Steps

**PA KENG, (EIGHT POWERS):** method of applying force in Tai Chi Chuan, roughly translated as the Eight Energies or Eight Powers.

**PA KUA, (EIGHT TRIGRAMS):** ancient Chinese symbol containing Eight Trigrams used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality and changes, seen as a range of eight interrelated concepts, each consists of three lines, each line either broken or unbroken, representing yin or yang, respectively, also called Bagua

**PENG:** outward expanding and moving energy, responding to incoming energy by adhering, maintaining one's own posture, and bouncing the incoming energy back

**PUSHING HANDS, (SI SHOU):** Tai Chi exercise for understanding the energy that is directed at you; combines Peng, Lu, Ji, An to develop sensitivity, response, and how to redirect force

**SHAOLIN:** young woods; Buddhist Monastery in China famous for Martial Arts techniques

**SHEN:** spirit, concentration, shen resides in the midbrain centre Upper Dan Tien

**SEI JEUNG:** from the theory of Yin and Yang we find Greater Yin, Lesser Yang, Lesser Yin and Greater Yang. These tell us that although there can be both pure attack and pure defense, attack can also contain elements of defense and likewise defense can contain elements of attack

**SUN TZU (THE ART OF WAR):** collective wisdom and strategy for conflict and warfare by ancient Chinese military leaders (300 BC)

**TAI CHI CHUAN, (TAIJIQUAN):** supreme ultimate fist (boxing); martial art and natural healing system originating in China 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. based on the study of animal movements, self-defense and the concept of Yin and Yang; Tai Chi was originally developed as a martial art but was quickly recognized as being beneficial to the body and mind, and is now practised for peaceful and holistic therapy; a component of Traditional Chinese

Medicine used to balance internal energy, vitality, mind expansion, spiritual cultivation

**TAI CHI 24 FORMS, (SIMPLIFIED 24 FORMS, BEIJING 24):** Tai Chi sequence created in 1956 by the National Physical Culture and Sports Commission of China as part of the drive to standardise training and introduce holistic therapy and competition forms; aimed at the beginner using 24 representative moves from the original Yang style 88 Forms

**TAI CHI 48 FORMS, (STANDARD 48 FORMS):** Tai Chi sequence created in 1956 by the National Physical Culture and Sports Commission of China as part of the drive to document and standardise training and introduce holistic therapy and competition forms; aimed at the beginner using 48 representative moves from the original Yang style 88 Forms

**TAO, (DAO):** the natural way, path of virtue, force behind everything; philosophy originating from China in 10,000 B.C.; the art of living in peace and harmony with nature according to the principles found in the I Ching, Tao Te Ching, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu, that emphasise wisdom, compassion, acceptance, patience, moderation, and humility

**TAO TE CHING, (DAO DE JING):** 'The Way of Virtue and Power' by Lao Tzu (600 B.C.); classical text on the philosophy of Tao containing insights into the practice of Tai Chi Chuan

**THREE TREASURES:** essential Chi Kung philosophy regarding **JING, CHI** and **SHEN** as the origin and root of our life. The main goals of Chi Kung are to learn how to retain the Jing, strengthen and smooth the flow of Chi, and enlighten the Shen

**WANG TSUNG-YUEH:** legendary Tai Chi master; may have been the first person to call the art 'Tai Chi Chuan' and to have developed the choreography between the Original Thirteen Postures; wrote several books on Tai Chi Chuan that contributed to the Tai Chi Chuan Classics, (1733-1795 A.D.)

**WU CHI:** emptiness, nothingness

**WU WEI:** energy follows the path of least resistance

**YANG:** active extrovert polarity, change that can be felt and seen

**YANG CHENG-FU:** famous Yang style Tai Chi Master and grandson of Yang Lu-Chang, regarded as founder of modern Tai Chi, emphasised health and self defence; wrote several books on Tai Chi Chuan that contributed to the Tai Chi Chuan Classics, (1883-1936 A.D.)

**YANG LU-CHANG:** one of the greatest masters of Tai Chi Chuan earning the title of "Invincible Yang"; during the Ching Dynasty he served as chief combat instructor for the Imperial Guard and created the Yang style of Tai Chi, (1799-1872 A.D.)

**YI:** peaceful mind, wise mind

**YIN:** passive introvert polarity, change that can be felt but not seen

**YIN YANG:** Tao symbol for duality, harmony, reversal and change, born when the great void began to move, contains the fundamental philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan

**This book contains many references and excerpts from the following websites:**

[www.balimeditation.com](http://www.balimeditation.com)  
[www.bdk-jp.org](http://www.bdk-jp.org)  
[www.everyday-taichi.com](http://www.everyday-taichi.com)  
[www.egreenway.com](http://www.egreenway.com)  
[www.gilmanstudio.com](http://www.gilmanstudio.com)  
[www.gbrodsky.com](http://www.gbrodsky.com)  
[www.ichingwisdom.com](http://www.ichingwisdom.com)  
[www.jadedragon.com](http://www.jadedragon.com)  
[www.kennethamackenzie.com](http://www.kennethamackenzie.com)  
[www.kung-fu-chiang-mai.com](http://www.kung-fu-chiang-mai.com)  
[www.qigong.com](http://www.qigong.com)  
[www.qigongexerciseguide.com](http://www.qigongexerciseguide.com)  
[www.at-taichi.com](http://www.at-taichi.com)  
[www.scheele.org](http://www.scheele.org)  
[www.taichiaustralia.com](http://www.taichiaustralia.com)

[www.taichiboxing.com](http://www.taichiboxing.com)  
[www.taichihealthways.com](http://www.taichihealthways.com)  
[www.taichimasterhenry.com](http://www.taichimasterhenry.com)  
[www.taichithailand.com](http://www.taichithailand.com)  
[www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com)  
[www.universal-tao.com](http://www.universal-tao.com)  
[www.wanderingdao.com](http://www.wanderingdao.com)  
[www.wudangqigong.com](http://www.wudangqigong.com)  
[www.taoteching.org](http://www.taoteching.org)  
[www.wudangtao.com](http://www.wudangtao.com)  
[www.wuji.com](http://www.wuji.com)  
[www.yangfamilytaichi.com](http://www.yangfamilytaichi.com)  
[www.ymaa.com](http://www.ymaa.com)  
[www.yangchengfu.org](http://www.yangchengfu.org)  
[www.zeigua.com](http://www.zeigua.com)

**This book contains many references and excerpts from the following books:**

The Art of War by Sun Tzu – Translation by the Denma Translation Group  
The Book of Chuang Tzu – Translation by Martin Palmer  
Chinese Pakua – Ong Hean-Tatt  
Chronicles of Tao, the Secret Life of a Taoist Master – Deng Ming-Dao  
The Complete Guide to Chi Kung – Daniel Reed  
The Complete Works of Lao Tzu – Translation by Hua-Ching Ni  
The Eight Immortals of Taoism – Kwok Man Ho and Joanne O'brien  
Eight Simple Qigong Exercises for Health – Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming  
The Essence of Tai Chi, Chi Kung, Health & Martial Art – Dr. Yang. Jwing-Ming  
The Essential Confucius – Translation by Thomas Cleary  
Essential Postures Training Program – Master Keith Arthur Good  
Falun Gong, The Great Law of Cultivation – Li Hongzhi  
Healing Light of the Tao – Mantak Chia  
Healing Love through the Tao – Mantak Chia  
The I Ching – Translation by Thomas Cleary  
Inner Bridges – Fritz Frederick Smith  
Living I Ching – Deng Ming-Dao  
Inner Bridges – Fritz Fredrick Smith M.D.  
Handbook of Tai Chi Chuan Exercises – Zhang Fuxing  
Inner Structure of Tai Chi Chi Kung – Mantak Chia  
Lieh-Tzu – Translation by Eva Wong  
Living Tao – Derek Lin  
Living Chi – Gary Khor  
The Master – Chao-Hsui Chen  
Master Cheng's Thirteen Chapters on Tai Chi Chuan – Cheng Man-Ching  
The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan – Freya and Martin Boedicker  
Principles of Effortless Power – Peter Ralston  
The Root of Chinese Qigong – Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming  
The Simple Art of Tai Chi – Qu Lei Lei  
365 Tao Daily Meditations – Deng Ming-Dao  
Scholar Warrior – Deng Ming-Dao  
Tai Chi – Cheng Man-Ching and Robert W. Smith  
Tai Chi According to the I Ching – Stuart Alve Olson  
The Tai Chi Boxing Chronicle – Kuo Lien-Ying  
Tai Chi Chuan and I Ching, A Choreography of Body and Mind – Da Lui  
Tao in Ten – Annellen Simpkins Ph.D and C. Alexander Simpkins Ph.D  
The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet – Benjamin Hoff  
Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu - Translation by Gai-fu Feng and Jane English  
Ultimate Guide to Tai Chi – John R. Little and Curtis F. Wong  
Water Margin, Heroes of the Marshes – Shih Nai-an  
The Way of Life, Lao Tzu – Translation by R. B. Blakney  
Wu Qin Xi – Compiled by the Chinese Health Qigong Association  
Wutan Tai Chi Chuan – Cheng Tin Hung and Dan Docherty  
Yang Family Secret Transmissions – Translation by Douglas Wong



## TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT

3 NIGHTS 4 DAYS RETREAT IN TABANAN BALI

\* Tai Chi \* Qigong \* Yoga \* Trekking \* Canoeing \* Hot Springs \*

Experience the healing power of nature in this unique mountain retreat package surrounded by scenic views, rainforests, waterfalls, hot springs and lakes. The perfect environment for health, relaxation and spiritual growth.

For more information Email: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com)

*"Millions of people have been healed by the therapeutic powers of Tai Chi. With over 40 simple exercises, this book inspires us to develop a healthy and meaningful life. It encourages us to rediscover our spiritual unity by integrating the philosophy of Tao into our daily life."*

*"Tai Chi exercise from ancient China is a set of slow and graceful movements, gentle breathing and peaceful meditation that guides the healing energy of nature to flow freely throughout our body, mind and spirit, creating love, wisdom and compassion in everyday life."*

*"Research at the Beijing College of Traditional Chinese Medicine shows that Tai Chi breathing, movement and meditation techniques prolong life, promote stress-free healthy functioning, and assist healing."*

### TAI CHI DANCE OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

DAVE WEST



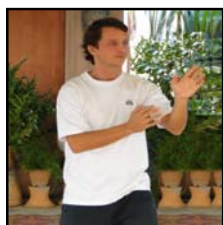
Other Books and CDs by Dave West

#### **10 MEDITATIONS FOR INNER PEACE AND HAPPINESS**

**The Ancient Secrets of Yoga, Meditation and Relaxation**

\* Free download available at [www.taichibali.com/yoga.php](http://www.taichibali.com/yoga.php)

10 MEDITATIONS FOR INNER PEACE AND HAPPINESS cuts through the commercialism that now clouds the real meaning of Yoga. Beyond the postures and exercises the teachings of Yoga show us the path to freedom, direct realisation of Truth, and loving union with the Divine. Take time from the hectic pace of modern living to experience the stillness and silence of meditation and yoga. This book awakens the mind to the potentials that are present in each and every one of us. When we open our mind to meditation, change becomes possible, and problems dissolve as deeper wisdom emerges. 10 MEDITATIONS FOR INNER PEACE AND HAPPINESS is a foundation in personal development based on the ancient secrets of Yoga, Tantra Meditation and Relaxation.



**DAVE WEST** began his spiritual journey in India, Nepal and Tibet in the early 1990's, practising Yoga and Buddhism with Himalayan Yoga masters. After 2000 he began studying Tai Chi and Chi Kung with several masters from China, Thailand, UK, USA and Canada. His latest book combines the art of Tai Chi, Tao philosophy and TCM into simple and effective exercises for living in health and harmony with the natural world. Dave has taught Tai Chi, Yoga and Physical Education at international schools, hotels and health centres around the world. Dave lives, teaches, and surfs in Bali.



MADE IN BALI COPYRIGHT 2010 TAI CHI BALI MOUNTAIN RETREAT EDITION

Web: [www.taichibali.com](http://www.taichibali.com) Email: [info@taichibali.com](mailto:info@taichibali.com) Tel: +62 8123 646 7324

This book is created with love and distributed free. It is meant to provide guidance and counsel for those who wish to practise.