



# The Well



(I Ching) drawing on deep sources of nourishment

Volume 16, Issue 2

## Greetings!

Winter is slowly fading which means the vibration of spring can't be far behind. This is the transition from quiet, still and deep to germination, sprouting and budding. The seasonal transitions can give us insight on how to make transitions in our own lives.

The feature article this issue is on tai chi. The Universal Tao page has information on upcoming classes including Mantak Chia in San Francisco, Chi Nei Tsang, and the regular monthly schedule.

A huge **THANK YOU** to Rick DeTroye, L.Ac., for covering my herbal practice, and to everyone who supports me to be able to do a personal retreat.

Wishing you and yours an uplifting and inspired spring!

Cheers!

*Kyle Chino, L.Ac.* 

## Personal Retreat Report

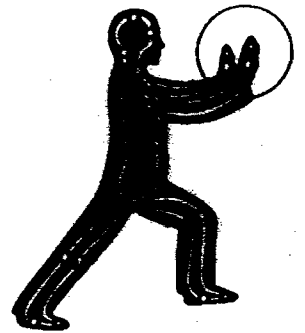
If someone had told me 10 years ago that I would be spending one month each year in personal retreat...well, I would have laughed. Now these personal retreats have become so regular and familiar it is difficult to imagine my yearly schedule without one.

Over time these retreat times have changed. At first, I would travel somewhere to study/train with a teacher. Recently I have been undertaking more of a personal, seclusion approach. I'm sure it'll continue to evolve.

The beautiful aspect of this time is how it complements daily practice. So much of daily practice time is spent transitioning from work, stress, and etc. to a calm, meditative beingness. One of the great values of an extended dedicated retreat is not having to transition in and out of the meditative state. This allows for a more subtle exploration of whatever comes up without interruption, bringing deeper experience and insight.

## Exploring Tai Chi

It is pre-dawn light, Shanghai, China; walking to a neighborhood park. I arrive with several hundred Chinese and wait. When the gates unlock, there is a rush into the park, people vying for their favorite spot. There are circles worn into the ground around almost every tree.



My morning tai chi experiences opened my eyes to its immense popularity in Asia. And now, that popularity has found it's way across the Pacific to the U.S.

Watching people practice in the parks showed me many aspects of tai chi, different styles, types of people, and reasons to practice. There are Yang, Chen, and Wu styles with many variations within each style. There are people of every age and background. There are routines focused on developing skill in martial arts, acrobatics, healing, and spiritual development.

The variety of these experiences helped me find one of the most important aspects of tai chi. It is extremely adaptable. The base of tai chi is so flexible it can be adapted to and by each person for his or her own interests. Like clay, it can be shaped and molded into many shapes to fit many reasons for playing tai chi.

Even western academic scientists have begun to study and 'document' the benefits of playing tai chi. In the September 2005 issue of the *Johns Hopkins Medical Letter* an article summarized recent medical research and studies on tai chi benefits.

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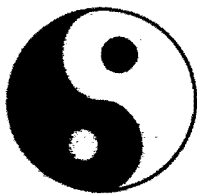
They included:

- Blood pressure reduction
- Improved balance and fall prevention
- Joint pain reduction
- Cardiovascular benefit
- Improved sleep quality
- Immune function benefit
- Stress relief

Westerners tend to rely on 'medical research' to validate claims regarding any of the Chinese healing arts. But, these are only benefits on the physical level. The root of tai chi lies within the same energetic system shared by acupuncture, herbs, massage, meditation, and chi kung. In other words, with some practice and skill, playing tai chi can bring similar results as treatment with acupuncture or any other modality. It is not that tai chi should replace these treatments, but complement the benefits.

Kim Lew has been playing tai chi for many years. Here's part of how she describes what tai chi means to her.

*There is an icon prevalent in popular culture. Two tadpoles swirling in a circle. Frequently black and white. Yin and Yang. It is the symbol of tai chi.*

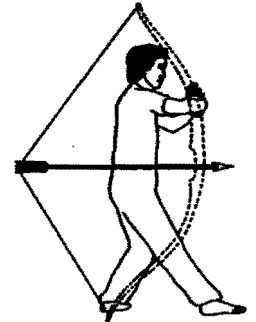
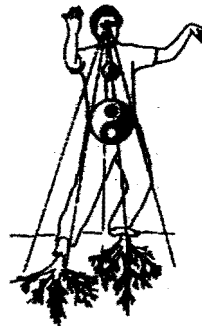


*The tai chi symbol represents movement and flow: the Yang pushing the Yin and the Yin drawing in the Yang. It is about duality, relative states and dynamic balance. Night follows day. Summer follows winter. Heat as a relative absence of cool. Tai chi is our awareness of the interchanging and ever changing dance of Life.*

*In Tai Chi Chi Kung the concepts of Yin and Yang are given a physical reality. The sequence of movements allows us the space and place to explore change in balance. The precision and familiarity of the tai chi form creates a consistent backdrop on which we can quietly observe ourselves. Through breath and motion we can bring attention to our body in coordination and rhythm with itself. Through practice and repetition we learn to relax and flow.*

*Health is about being whole. Physically. Mentally. Emotionally. Energetically. When healthy, all the aspects through which we express ourselves are flowing. A balance of Yin and Yang. Warm/Cool. Up/down. Open/closed. Logical/intuitive. Joy/sorrow. Love/fear. Protective/receptive. Expanding/contracting. Storing/releasing. Advancing/retreating. We are unity in motion.*

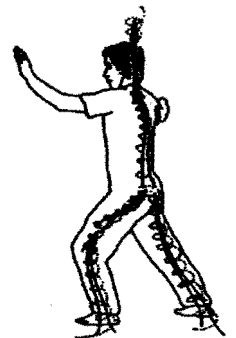
*This is tai chi.*



My personal practice of tai chi is one part of a chi kung/meditation system. Within that system there are sitting, standing, and moving practices. Tai chi is used as a way to incorporate the stillness of sitting and rootedness of standing into flowing movement. In essence it is meditation in motion. Practicing meditation in motion – playing tai chi – allows me to explore and learn how to accomplish the same thing as I move through my daily life.

One may choose to play tai chi for many different reasons – 'it's all good.' It can be for physical exercise, body energetics, calming the mind, following the breath, balancing yin and yang, dancing with the wind, river, and trees. The beauty of this art is adaptability that provides each of these aspects to different people.

If you are interested in exploring tai chi for yourself, I am offering a class in March on Monday evenings. See the schedule of the next page and call with questions or to register.



♥ Thanks to Kim Lew for her contribution to this article.