

Internal Energy Training in Chinese Chen Style Taiji

By Mr. Liu ShaoHua, student of the great Taiji Master Mahong.

The ancient art of Chinese Boxing known as Taiji ("vast space", "nothing excluded" or "universe") can be considered as one of the best forms of martial arts. It has a profound theory, many different variations and a wide range of applications. Taiji has a deep and wide philosophical base and profound meaning. Practitioners should understand its theory, take painstaking effort in training, ignore personal honor and selfishness and do as many good works as possible.

The concept of Taiji comes from a range of ancient Chinese philosophic and natural ideas, which combine man and the nature. The exercises involved in Taiji have a course from rough to details, from shallow to profound and from external to internal. Taiji training gradually develops from the practice of external form to internal energy exercises and to the practice of the mind and the spirit. The training and theory of Taiji can cultivate character and mind. It can keep the body in a state of good health and nurse it.

Chen style Taiji is one form of martial arts and, therefore, has also the capability of being used for self-defense and in the combat. However, a person who concentrates above all on these aspects of Taiji will lose the deeper meaning of this art. To understand the meaning and to get maximal benefit from the exercises Taiji should be practiced in its wide and profound sense.

The underlying philosophy of Taiji is based on traditional cultural characteristic concept of serenity and "unworldliness". Taiji's internal energy training methods develop the concept of noble character, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy and fidelity. These cultivate simple, honest, moderate and upright qualities. Practical training includes spiral-like actions and alternately ying and yang: inhaling and exhaling, withdrawing and extending, slow and fast movements, tight and loose, static and moving, firm and relaxed postures which all vary and complement each other. This kind of Taiji training encourages inspiration and mobilizes the energy of the entire body. It cultivates and strengthens the qi circulation in the meridians and viscera (e.g. heart, lungs, stomach, kidneys, and large and small intestines). It increases the internal energy, strengthens the channels and collaterals and makes the trainee full of vitality.

People who practice Taiji can learn to understand and appreciate the reality, charity, beauty and profoundness of the nature. Taiji training has also immediate and concrete health nurturing and curing effects, which are very valuable.

It may take a lifetime to understand the essence of Taiji but people who practice it will enjoy it and find it absorbing and extremely rewarding.

Chen Style Fundamental Taiji Training

Taiji training is normally started with fundamental exercises including dynamic qigong and silk reeling exercises. These are necessary for Taiji practitioners to enhance and strengthen

the qi circulation and to reach higher Taiji skill levels. Some of the most common exercises are briefly explained below:

1. Neck exercise:

Standing the hands on the hips and with the legs as wide as the shoulders.

- a) Twisting the neck: Turn the head to the left and to the right 36 times to each side
- b) Stretching the neck: Tilt the head in a vertical plane 36 times to both sides
- c) Stretching the neck: Rotate the head in a vertical plane forward and back in two directions 36 times in both directions.
- d) Stretching the neck: Roll the head in a horizontal plane 36 times clockwise and anti-clockwise.

2. Waist exercise:

Rotate the waist in a horizontal plane clockwise and anti-clockwise 36 times in both directions.

3. Leg exercise:

Stand on one leg with a bent knee. Lift the knee of the other leg and rotate the foot and the ankle clockwise and anti-clockwise 36 times in both directions.

4. Shoulder exercises:

- a) Using your internal energy, roll the right shoulder in a vertical plane forward and back first clockwise, then anti-clockwise, 36 times in both directions. Do the same with your left shoulder.
- b) Roll both shoulders at the same time in a vertical plane first clockwise, then anti-clockwise, 36 times in both directions.

5. Leg and arm exercise:

- a) Raise both hands in front of you, palms up and lower them to both sides palms down (opening and closing). Repeat 36 times.
- b) Stand on one leg with a bent knee, lift the knee of the other leg and slowly kick to the side. Repeat this 18 times. Close and open your upper body and the arms (with clenched hands) at the same time. Do the same standing on your other leg.

- c) Single hand silk-reeling, 36 times with each hand.
 - d) Both hands clenched in front of you, knuckles forwards, slowly swing the arms to both sides in horizontal plain and bring again together. Repeat 36 times. Open and close your upper body at the same time.
 - e) Both hands silk-reeling, 36 times in each direction.
 - f) Both hands clenched in front of you knuckles upwards, slowly swing the arms down to both sides in a vertical plain and bring again up in front of you. Repeat 36 times.
 - g) Left and right extended foot stepping (1). Step out 10 times with both legs.
 - h) Both hands clenched in front of you, stretching the wrists by rotating both fists to opposite directions 36 times. Repeat to the other direction. Open and close your body in synchronization with the rotating movement.
 - i) Left and right extended foot-stepping (2) synchronized with the arm movement. Step out 10 times with each leg.
 - j) Both hands horizontally in front of you, palms down. Swing the hands slowly and relaxed down to both sides and up again. Repeat 50 times.
5. Silk-reeling on both sides of the abdomen both hands moving in opposite directions, 36 times in each direction.
6. Trembling the lower abdomen (Dan Tian) horizontally (twisting) 50 times and vertically (vibrating) 50 times.
7. Tapping with the palms on the chest, abdomen and both kidneys about 100 times all together
8. "Counting fingers" about 100 times
9. Lower abdomen (Dan Tian) rotation inside clockwise and anti-clockwise, 36 times in each direction.

Function of the Fundamental Training

An experienced taiji teacher is needed to give guidance in the correct performance of the fundamental training exercises.

Along with the enhanced qi circulation these exercises also have immediate and concrete health curing and nurturing effects as described below.

Exercise:

1. Nursing cervical (neck), thoracic (chest), waist and lumbal vertebra problems.
2. Nursing kidney, large intestine and small intestine problems.
3. Make the joints of the lower limbs flexible and makes the ankles strong and healthy.
4. Nurse cervical diseases and periartthritis (shoulder disease).
- 5a), d), f) Nurse the five viscera.
- 5 b) Strengthen muscles and bones of lower limbs.
- 5c), e), g), i) Strengthen the muscles and the bones in the entire body.
- 5j) Relaxes the entire body
- 6, 7, 8, 9,10. Enhance internal strength and nurse the five viscera.

The article has been translated from Chinese to English by Jackie Feng who is studying English language in the Guangxi University in Guilin, PRC and is also a Taiji student of Mr. Liu Shaohua.

© Copyright Liu Shaohua