

TAI CHI IS NATURAL LIKE A TREE

by C.K.Chern

Tai Chi's purpose is to be relaxed, to be at ease. Health. Relaxation. If the chi stops at a bent joint, at the elbow for instance, then the practitioner is going to be tight there. The chi can't flow through and there is blockage. Just like a flowing river or water in a hose. If it stops it stagnates and is precursor to death.

Moving water is life. If it can't flow, then you will not be healthy in that place where it is blocked. Injury that you think of in external ways -- that you let stay blocked -- that you let 'heal itself'; is like traffic backed up on a highway. The longer that it's not flowing through, it's like a bigger traffic jam.

Inside you let the person release and relax all the way through. That's the correct 'treatment'. It's inside -- the internal organs -- that must release and relax. So if you have an external injury or an intestinal injury or a heart injury it's still all the same principle of moving water, of the chi being able to release through the injured area.

Chi cultivates through this releasing, relaxing, opening. After it can move well, slowly it builds by itself. Like a tree, it's very natural, you have root, you suck in sunlight, you suck in nutrients, you grow, the tree gets bigger, and grows up towards the light.

You never say 'has' or 'has not' chi, everyone does have chi, but it's the quality of building and growing that concerns us. But first it's relaxing, letting it flow well, obeying the principles of good Tai Chi.

Then the chi builds up and you let it circulate through the practice of the form and other exercises. So outside people say they can 'give' you chi, that they can touch your head and enlighten you. Is it possible that if you gave a tree lots of nutrients and water and sunshine that it would immediately become a big tree? Its growth is a natural idea, a process.

A tree becomes huge naturally the result of a natural process of cultivation. If it grows fast, it's because inside it has this chi. We have to practice these basics very well, and let our growth occur naturally like it does for the tree.

The martial part of Tai Chi is like your skin and your hair only. It's so shallow, it's such a little portion of the significance of Tai Chi. It's just the tip of the iceberg of our growth.

*Taiwan, 1996
Translated by Kyle Plagan
Transcribed by Sita Edwards*