

Taijiquan Training (English Version)

Part of a longer article by John Higginson (4th duan Maestro Instructor N.W. Region)

All of us who practise the noble art of Taijiquan are interested in developing in at least one of its many aspects: ability, skill, growth of patience, having a inner - center to hold becoming a martial artist, improving as a person, forming relationships, obtain a certain spiritual sense, etc, even competing.

On reading a book or an article, seeing a report or attending classes, few people comment on the practical application of the art, to reach a certain objective. We are impressed with words about the wonders of Taijiquan, which of course are true, or by the beauty, gracefulness and apparent ease of its gentle movements. But without the daily and diligent practice of the art and its principles, they would be no use at all. We often attend classes or courses, ending with our legs aching (a reward for hard work) or with us being slightly aware of our tensions, but we go home to rest (and forget). But what about our objectives for which we started to practise?

We always want " the best, the quickest, the easiest and, if possible, the cheapest". Therefore, we forget to practise until our next class, and so we allow all the benefits of the art to escape from our hands.

Even if at times we feel over whelmed by tasks, lack of time or the hurries of life; who is unable to take a little time to feel suspended from the top of one's head, pull in one's chest, round one's shoulders, bend one's knees slightly, keep one's back straight and relax a bit? The practice of these and other principles leads to ability and skill, health and relaxation, so "what's the problem?" Surely we can still take life a bit more calmly.

The same thing happens with traditional weapons are used. Some people get frightened, and they consider it violent, or only suitable for people with a high level , or dangerous. Why? It is still Taijiquan, with all its principles and its benefits for health and relaxation, and its philosophy and its spirit are there. Nothing has moved or changed, or emigrated to another place; there's simply something else in one's hands to explore in the art. What's more, this practice enables us to progress in our approach, since our vision of the art will be more global and at the same time it will help us to work with greater attention and discover more subtleties. In this way, we will get better and our practice will begin to increase in quality.

This is what also happens with fast forms, push - hand methods or free pushing hands: they all pursue the same end, the same principles, exactly the same as at the beginning. Therefore, everything is the same:

TAIJIQUAN. The only thing that changes is the quality with which it is done, and this comes only through practice and learning.

Therefore, all of us who are interested in taking advantage of the many benefits of Taijiquan should give some of our time and our effort to improve a little more. Thus, both daily the chance to concentrate on different aspects of the art, are important.

When we are honoured by the visit of a Master, we should first find out who he is, what style he practises, and what he is going to teach, and we should ask our instructors for references, after which we should try to attend the sessions. We should forget our prejudices about " my level being low because I only started a few months ago" and this kind of thing, since, in the final analysis, we're all there to learn and get better, perfecting our ability on the art both in quantity and in quality, for ourselves and for those around us, because one of the important points of Taijiquan is our relationship with others.

There are also people who may be lacking in character and motivation, and perhaps the instructor finds it very hard to transmit to them his love of and interest in Taijiquan; such people start classes, but it isn't long

before they stop attending without having got a real taste of the art, so they give up empty-handed instead of enjoying a "mountain full of treasures".

"The way of perfection is hard and demands great commitment, but the reward that can be obtained has a value which cannot be calculated".

So let's allow this noble art to spread and reach every aspect of life, which it will no doubt do, and let's get ready to relax, or better still, to "let it go".

"There are 3 important factors in learning the art: correct teaching, natural talent, and perseverance. There can be no success at all without perseverance.

Every day that we practise the form, we lay down a layer of skill as thin as tissue paper but with time even thin sheets of tissue can pile up high. Persevere." (The inner way).

Soon, there will be an increase in the number of people interested in practising Taiji. Some will be strong, sharp and perceptive, but they must be careful to be satisfied with small successes, dominating immediate results. Others want immediately results but they must not fall into the trap of neglecting the details, learning a large number of techniques quickly. The latter will copy the outward aspect but will ignore the inward aspect, and for this reaction they will miss the whole point of Taijiquan. When we analyse their form, we will see that it doesn't have the correct measure, and the daily corrections are neglected

The objective can only be reached in a natural way after many days, months or years. Taijiquan isn't a kind of thing related to western techniques, in which everything is easily explained and proved, and few things require such a subtle and deep study. ("But the most important is if you don't use your brain, you can't train")

"Every move or the solo form has health benefits- for example Single Whip is an opening movement which benefits the heart. There is no need, however, to explore this in too great detail for if you are doing the movements correctly the health benefits will follow." (The Inner Warrior)

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