

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS ON THE 18 LOHAN HANDS



QUESTION 1

It is said that from the 500 Arahants or Lohans, Bodhidharma chose to honor 18 of them that were most appreciated by the Chinese to overcome cultural differences when spreading Buddhism to China. Also most Chi Kung and Kung Fu sets are based on the "magic number" of 18 or multiples of it due to Bodhidharma's choice.

Can you please tell us more about these 18 Lohans?

Are there any records how the Shaolin monks practiced the 18 Lohan Hands in the past. (i.e. for how long; how many repetitions; all exercises at once or separately; did they develop chi flow similar to ours; etc.)

— Sifu Leonard

An Arahant, or Lohan in Chinese, is one who has attained Enlightenment. The term "Arahant" is often used in Hinayana Buddhism. In Mahayana Buddhism, one who has attained Enlightenment is called a Buddha. The term "Lohan" is often used in Chinese Buddhism to denote a disciple who learned directly from the Buddha.

I am not sure whether it was Bodhidharma who introduced the 18 Lohans into China, but the 18 Lohans are certainly very popular in Chinese Buddhism, and they are frequently worshipped in Chinese Buddhist temples.

I don't think these 18 Lohans were selected to differentiate between Indian and Chinese culture. In fact both their names and the appearance they are normally depicted are Indian. Their Sanskrit names are transliterated into Chinese characters.

For example, the first Lohan is Pindola Bharadvaja, and is called Pin-tu-lo-Po-lo-to-she in Chinese. It is worthy of note that "Pin-tu-lo-Po-lo-to-she" is the Chinese pronunciation in classical times. The written Chinese characters are the same, but because the sounds of the characters have changed over time, the modern pronunciation of the same words in Mandarin is Bīndùluó Báluódùshé.

"Pin-tu-lo-Po-lo-to-she" is not a name easy for typical Chinese to remember. Hence the Lohans are often addressed by their attributes. Pin-tu-lo-Po-lo-to-she, or Pindola Bharadvaja in Sanskrit, is usually depicted as riding a deer. Hence, he is often addressed as Dear-Riding Lohan, or Qīlù Luóhàn in Modern Mandarin pronunciation.

The 18 Lohans are listed below with their names in Sanskrit, their Chinese transliterations as pronounced in classical times, their attributes, their modern pronunciation in Mandarin, and a brief description.

The order of the listing is not dependent on their seniority or the level of their spiritual development, but on the order of their appearance before a famous artist. In 891 CE the 18 Lohans appeared before Guan Xiu who painted them. The emperor made copies of the images and distributed them over China.

The 6th Lohan, Po-t'e-lo or Bhadra, is sometimes confused with Bodhidharma,

our First Patriarch. Bodhidharma, who lived more than a thousand years after the Buddha, could not be a Lohan, i.e. his direct disciple. Bodhidharma is regarded as a Bodhisattva, rather than a Lohan.

1. Pindola Bharadvaja - Pin-tu-lo-Po-lo-to-she, Deer-Riding Lohan - Qílù Luóhàn. Sitting dignified on a deer, he had long eye-brows, was noted for psychic powers, and his voice was like the roar of a lion.
2. Kanaka Vatsa - Ka-no-ka-Fa-tso, Joyful Lohan - Xǐqīng Luóhàn. He was very skillful in public speaking and debates. He said that happiness was experienced through the five senses but joy was experienced from within. He sometimes banged cymbals in his joy.
3. Karaka Bharadvaja - Ka-no-ka-Po-li-tou-she, Raised Bow Lohan - Jǔbō Luóhàn. A mendicant monk who asked for alms by raising his bowl, he often raised one leg in the air representing royal ease. He symbolized receiving gifts gracefully.
4. Subhinda - Su-p'ín-t'e, Lift Pagoda Lohan - Tuōda Luóhàn. He was the last disciple of the Buddha. He held a pagoda in his hand as a remembrance for the Buddha. The pagoda was then introduced into China.
5. Nakula - No-ku-lo, Meditating Lohand - Jǐngzuò Luóhàn. He was a great warrior with tremendous strength who later became a monk. He attained Enlightenment through meditation.
6. Bhadra - Po-t'e-lo, Oversea Lohan - Guojiāng Luóhàn. His name meant virtuous and sagacious. He spread the Dharma across the seas to the East Indies and Java.
7. Kalika - Ka-li-ka, Elephant-Riding Lohan - Qíxiàng Luóhàn. He was an elephant tamer. The elephant symbolizes strength, endurance and perseverance. Kalika represents patience, concentration and diligence.
8. Vajraputra - Fa-she-lo-fuh-to-lo, Laughing Lion Lohan - Xiàoshī Luóhàn. He advocated that both practice and understanding were necessary to attain wisdom. He was a former lion hunter before becoming a monk. A lion club joined him, grateful that he gave up his former profession.
9. Gobaka - Shu-po-ka, Open Heart Lohan - Kāixīn Luóhàn. Open the heart and see the Buddha. Gobaka was a crown prince. His younger brother started a rebellion but Gobaka assuring his brother that he would denounce the kingdom to become a monk, took off his garment and exposed a Buddha image on his heart.
0. Maha Panthaka - Mo-ha Pan-t'o-ka, Lifting Hands - Tànshǒu Luóhàn. He was a prince but became a monk. After meditation he would raise his hands like Lifting the Sky.
1. Rahula - Lo-hu-lo, Deep Concentration Lohan - Chénsi Luóhàn. He was the Buddha's son before the Buddha left the palace. Later he sought his father for his inheritance. His boyish look reflected his youth compared to the other Lohans.
2. Nagasena - Na-ka-si-na, Ear Cleansing Loahn - Wǎěr Luóhàn. Nagasena was usually depicted cleansing his ears which symbolized always hearing everything correctly. He had great supernatural powers and was an eloquent speaker and debater. He answered King Milinda's famous questions.
3. Angida - Yin-kie-t'e, Cloth Bag Lohan - Budai Luohan. Angida was a snake-catcher preventing them from harming people. He took out their fangs, put them into his bag and released them in the mountains, which symbolized exchanging bad for good.
4. Vanavasa - Fa-na-p'o-ssu, Banana Tree Lohan - Bājiāo Luóhàn. He was born during a heavy rainstorm, thus his name which meant rain. He liked to

meditate under a banana tree.

5. Ajita - A-shih-to, Long Eyebrow Lohan - Changmei Luohan. He was born with two long eyebrows. In his previous life he was a monk who failed to attain Enlightenment even cultivating to old age with only two eyebrows left. He attained Enlightenment in this life.
6. Chota-Panthaka - Chu-t'a-Pan-t'o-ka, Door Watching Lohan - Kanmen Luohan. He was so slow-witted that he could not remember a single line of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha taught him to sweep the floor, and each time he swept he recited the word "Sweep". In this way he focused his mind and attained Enlightenment.
7. Nantimitolo - Nam-ti-mi-to-lo, Subduing Dragon Lohan - Xianglong Luohan. People stole Buddhist sutras. The Dragon King flooded the area and restored the sutras in his palace. Nantimitolo, which means Happy Friend, subdued the dragon guard and restored the sutras to the world.
8. Pindola - Pin-tu-lo, Taming Tiger Lohan - Fuhu Luohan. Pindola was a Brahmin and a general who later became a monk. He heard a tiger howling every day. He gathered vegetarian food from the temple and fed the tiger.

Although the 18 Lohan Hands are in honour of the 18 Lohans, it does not mean that each hand or technique is derived from each of the 18 Lohans. However, the first pattern of the 18 Lohan Hands, Lifting the Sky, was likely to derive from Maha Panthaka, or Mo-ha Pan-t'o-ka in Chinese, who frequently lifted his hands after completing his meditation.

Yes, many Shaolin chi kung and kungfu sets are based on the number 18 in honour of the 18 Lohans. In our school, for example, we have the 18 Lohan Hands, 18-Lohan Art, 18 Shaolin chi Kung Techniques, and 18 Jewels.

In Shaolin Kungfu, many sets are based on 18 or multiples of it. For example, Four Gates, Tiger-Crane, Dragon-Tiger, and Lohan Asks the Way have 36 patterns. Flower Set, Iron Wire and Dragon Strength have 72 patterns. Triple Stretch and Essence of Shaolin have 108 patterns.

Although there were pictures showing how the 18 Lohan Hands were practiced by the Shaolin monks in the past, there were no records how these 18 Lohan Hands were practiced. Because of its long history, there are a few different versions of the 18 Lohan Hands. In some versions, the 18 Lohan Hands were practiced like exercises in Sinew Metamorphosis. In some versions they were practiced while sitting in the lotus position.

There was no definite record of for how long and for how many repetitions the 18 Lohan Hands were performed. This was probably because the time taken and the number of repetitions depended on various factors like the objectives of the training sessions and the developmental stages of the monks.

Nevertheless, from various records I have the impression that the Shaolin monks in the past practiced all the 18 Lohan Hands as a set instead of individual patterns as we usually do in our school. I also believe that the monks took a longer time to practice the 18 Lohan Hands, perhaps an hour per session, not just 15 minutes a session as recommended in our school.

As far as I can gather from classical records as well as from genuine Shaolin lineages practicing the 18 Lohan Hands, the Shaolin monks in the past as well as

modern practitioners of genuine lineages did not develop chi flow similar to ours. They merely performed the patterns, and any chi flow, which was slight compared to us, was during the performance of the patterns. Sometimes they might sway for a few seconds, poetically known as Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows, after performing the whole set of 18 Lohan Hands. This was also how I learned and practiced the 18 Lohan Hands from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.

The vigorous chi flow movements commonly seen in our school was developed in my long years of teaching. When I first taught chi kung to the public in the 1970s, I taught the 18 Lohan Hands in a package course of 6 months. Many kungfu and chi kung masters laughed at me, commenting how I could teach chi kung in six months. In their concept, chi kung training took years. Some were angry at me for teaching non-Chinese.

Initially I taught the 18 Lohan Hands the way I learned from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, which was performing the patterns with focus on perfect form and correct breathing, and which was also the way chi kung was taught by genuine Shaolin masters. It took my early students about 4 to 6 months to have some visible chi flow movements. This was quite remarkable as I myself took more than a year to have similar results, and I was regarded as an exemplary student.

By the 1980s, chi flow movements had become more vigorous, but still they were nothing compared to what our students now experience. The increase of chi flow movements in both frequency and intensity was due much to my practice and study of a different genre of chi kung called Five-Animal Play, later more commonly known as Self-Manifested Chi Movement. By then the six-month course of 18 Lohan Hands had been reduced to three months, and when I traveled to teach in Australia the course was further reduced to 10 days, and then to 3 days.

When I first taught in Europe in the 1990s, I taught selection from the 18 Lohan Hands in 8 hours. Students could attain vigorous chi flow by the end of the course. Our teaching methodology continued to improve amazingly, and now we can achieve better results in just 4 hours.

It may sound presumptuous but I honestly believe that we may now be more cost-effective in the training of 18 Lohan Hands than even the Shaolin monks themselves in the past. Certainly a typical Shaolin Wahnam student now can practice the 18 Lohan Hands more effectively than I did even when I was known as an exemplary student. At that time I just practiced the 18 Lohan Hands, and over time, like a year or two, experienced some chi flow. I believe this also applied to what Shaolin monks in the past did. I did not differentiate between techniques and skills.

But now our Shaolin Wahnam students can use a same technique from the 18 Lohan Hands to operate different skills. Not only they can generate an energy flow, but also develop internal force, massage internal organs, cleanse their nerves and even expand into the Cosmos - in just one day. It is simply mind-blowing.

QUESTION 2

Sifu, would you kindly share with us which one is, from the 18 Lohan Hands, your favorite one. Why. Did you have any "Aha" Experiences while in your own practice and/or teaching them. If so, would you kindly share the one/s that you might consider more relevant?

— Santiago

Without doubt "Lifting the Sky" is my favorite not only from the 18 Lohan Hands but from all chi kung exercises. This is the chi kung exercise that I practice the most by a big margin from the second.

When someone asks me which chi kung exercise I have practiced the most, I have no hesitation to answer that it is "Lifting the Sky". If he asks me which exercise I have practiced the second most, I would have to think hard for an answer. Actually I still haven't thought out the answer.

Why is "Lifting the Sky" the one I have practiced the most?

Historically it was the first chi kung exercise I learned from my Sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. Rather this was the first exercise I recognized then as chi kung, and performed it correctly.

On hindsight the first chi kung exercises I learned were the various stances from Uncle Righteousness in Penang taught to me by a siheng, but at that time I practiced them as enduring physical exercise.

I also learned chi kung exercises from Wuzuquan in Sifu Chee Kim Thong's school in Dungun, taught to me by his eldest son, Sifu Chee Boon Leong. The whole San Zhan set was chi kung, but I did not derive any chi kung benefit from it, not because of my teacher's teaching but because of my own ignorance.

I also learned Abdominal Breathing from my Wuzuquan sihengs, who had much internal force, but I only performed the technique, lacking the skills to develop internal force. I knew then that Abdominal Breathing was chi kung, but I did not succeed in practicing it as chi kung. Without realizing it myself, I practiced it as gentle physical exercise.

"Lifting the Sky" was the first chi kung exercise that I performed correctly as chi kung. If I remember correctly, it was the first exercise Sifu Ho Fatt Nam taught me, even before teaching me stances. And he taught it to me himself, not delegating it to one of my seniors.

My sifu did not tell me it was chi kung, neither did I regard it as chi kung. As a good student, I just learned and practiced it dutifully. Indeed my sifu did not tell me anything special about "Lifting the Sky". All that about "Lifting the Sky" I am going to explain below came later from my own experience, my students' experiences and my research into chi kung classics.

I practiced "Lifting the Sky" everyday at the start of my kungfu training, as taught to me by my sifu. This is good confirmation of my advice to students that by

following faithfully what the teacher teaches, and not by trying to be smarter than him to add practice material on their own, the students will get the best benefits.

I did not generate external chi flow movements with "Lifting the Sky" like what we do in Shaolin Wahnam. But there must be internal chi flow, though I was not aware of it at that time, because I obtained a lot of chi kung benefits.

My migraine and hemorrhoids disappeared without my conscious knowing. I might not be conscious of it then, but "Lifting the Sky" improved my posture, mental clarity and kungfu performance.

Because of the many benefits that I myself have obtained from it, if I have to teach someone a chi kung exercise, I would inevitably choose "Lifting the Sky". It was later on hindsight that I listed out why "Lifting the Sky" was my favorite. The reasons are as follows.

1. It is relatively easy to learn and to practice.
2. The benefits are many and varied.
3. The benefits range from the basic to masters' levels.
4. At the basic level, it generates an energy flow.
5. At the most advanced level, it can enable practitioners to attain the highest spiritual fulfillment.
6. The benefits come relatively quickly.
7. Even when it is performed wrongly, out of carelessness or forgetfulness, the adverse effects are not serious.
8. Even when it is performed as gentle physical exercise, the benefits are good, like relaxation, good posture and loosening joints and muscles.

I did not learn the complete set of 18 Lohan Hands from my sifu. He only taught me "Lifting the Sky", "Separating Water" and "Big Windmill", and each exercise was taught to meet the need at the time.

"Lifting the Sky" was taught to start my kungfu training. I remember my sifu saying, "There is no need for warming up in kungfu. But Lifting the Sky acts like an excellent warming up exercise."

"Separating Water" was taught to increase my internal force. "Big Windmill" was taught as part of my Cosmos Palm training.

I once asked my sifu politely whether I could learn the whole set of 18 Lohan Hands. He explained kindly, "18 Lohan Hands were meant to make the Shaolin monks healthy so that they could practice kungfu. You are already very healthy. Focus on your kungfu." I am grateful for his advice, otherwise I might not have the kungfu attainment I now have.

I was sentimental over the 18 Lohan Hands because they were the exercises taught by our first patriarch, the great Bodhidharma. So years later after leaving Kuala Trengganu where I learned from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, I researched extensively and deeply into the 18 Lohan Hands.

I gathered the 18 exercises I considered the best and formulated them into a set, starting with the widely known set of eight Taoist chi kung exercises known

as the Eight Pieces of Brocade.

Interestingly, the health exercises I practiced as a boy scout, and which were listed in the book, *Scouting for Boys*, were similar to the eight chi kung exercises in Eight Pieces of Brocade.

I remember I was smiling to myself when I formulated the 18 Lohan Hands, thinking that future critics would point to our 18 Lohan Hands and say, "Hey. Look, these so-called Shaolin chi kung exercises were taken from Taoist chi kung".

Imagine my surprise when later I found in a classic that the same 18 Lohan Hands were recorded in the same order I listed them in our set. I could only attribute this wonderful coincidence (or was it a coincidence?) to my tapping into the past during meditation, or more poetically to divine guidance.

I had a few "Aha" experiences with "Lifting the Sky" and other of the 18 Lohan Hands.

Aha, I discovered that not only I could generate an energy flow with "Lifting the Sky", which was the original and usually the main purpose of my practice with this exercise, but also I could build internal force, not only at my arms but all over my body and focus the force at my dan tian.

Aha, I discovered that I could use "Lifting the Sky" to generate a cosmic shower. Before this, the method I used was Taoist meditation, opening the rush meridian and let energy blossomed out from "baihui" like a fountain, and come down as cosmic shower. This method was called "Opening of Five Petals" and would take years to accomplish. Now, using "Lifting the Sky" or "Carrying the Moon", I could transmit the skill to students and let them have a cosmic shower in just a one-day course. It was ridiculous but true.

Aha, in fact I could use "Lifting the Sky" or any chi kung exercise, though "Lifting the Sky" is usually more cost-effective than the others, to accomplish any chi kung skills. Not only the highest kungfu, but also the highest chi kung, is the mind.

Besides "Lifting the Sky", I also had a "Aha" experience with the prosaic-looking "Big Windmill". The "Big Windmill" my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, taught me was the forceful "Big Windmill", not the gentle "Big Windmill" we normally practice in our school.

This "Aha" experience happened years ago. After performing the forceful "Big Windmill" a few times I felt my arms and palms very powerful. I thought I could try breaking a brick. It broke, and I was very surprised because earlier I spent more than 2 years training Iron Palm from a book but I could not break a brick.

I thought it could be accidental. I tried a second time, and the brick broke. I tried a third time, and the brick still broke.

Another "Aha" experience was with "Three Levels to Ground". At first I did not think highly of this exercise, though in my younger days I practiced it everyday for two years in the Art of Flexibility, and taught it often to people with knee or

leg problems to help them recover. I sometimes wondered why I considered it one of the best 18 exercises to be included in the 18 Lohan Hands. It must be divine guidance.

It was during the UK Summer Camp in 2007 that I broke some tendons at my right knee during a kick. The injury was so bad that I could hardly walk up some stairs. I did "Three Levels to Ground" and "Bear Walk". In two days, my right knee recovered. Suddenly it occurred to me that Bodhidharma is great.

QUESTION 3

Are there any circumstances or scenarios when a student's interests would be best served by practicing the 18 Lohan Hands exclusively over a prolonged period of time (say 10-15 years) and not integrating other styles (e.g. Sinew Metamorphosis, 18 Lohan Arts etc) into his or her practice?

— Kevin

Yes, the following are some of the circumstances or scenarios.

The student does not have an opportunity to learn other arts, like Sinew Metamorphosis or 18-Lohan Arts.

His interests would be best served by practicing the 18 Lohan Hands exclusively over a prolonged period of time. If he stops practicing, he would not gain any chi kung benefits.

If he practices the 18 Lohan Hands well, he can gain a lot of benefit, including good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys. He may even achieve the highest spiritual attainment, i.e. attainment Enlightenment or returning to God the Holy Spirit, though he could probably attain it more cost-effectively through higher arts like Zen meditation if he had the opportunity to practice it.

If he practices mediocrely, he can still gain benefits that he would not have gained had he not practiced.

Even if the art he practices is not genuine chi kung but gentle physical exercise, he would still gain some benefit, like loosening joints and muscles, being relaxed and having good posture which will enable his organs to function at their best.

This scenario is not likely to occur in our modern world because people today have opportunities unimagined before in the past, even though most of the arts taught today have been grossly debased, which leads to the next scenario. But in the past the scenario was not uncommon. Just to practice chi kung, which would be of a lower level than the 18 Lohan Hands, was a rare opportunity.

Even at the Shaolin Temple, where the best arts were taught, many monks only had the opportunity to practice the 18 Lohan Hands. Sinew Metamorphosis, 18-Lohan Arts, Shaolin Kungfu and other forms of chi kung were not available to them.

Another scenario is that the other types of chi kung available are of a low level or not genuine, and only the 18 Lohan Hands is worthy. Then it would be to the student's interest to practice just the 18 Lohan Hands exclusively over a prolonged period of time.

This, in fact, was the real life scenario for many years when only the 18 Lohan Hands, or a selection of the exercises, was taught in our school. Before I taught the 18 Lohan Hands to the public, chi kung was very rare anywhere in the world.

I first taught a package-course of 18 Lohan Hands for six months. It was

revolutionary. No one, as far as I know, did something like this before. Before this, chi kung, better known as nei kung or internal art then, was taught as part of advanced kungfu to selected disciples.

Some kungfu masters thought I had gone crazy. Firstly, they questioned why I taught chi kung to the public; it was meant only for exclusive students. Secondly, they asked how I could teach chi kung in six months. Chi kung training was supposed to be for years. In such circumstances, which actually was the first scenario above, it would be to students' interest to practice 18 Lohan Hands for a prolonged period of time.

Gradually chi kung teachers from China went overseas, mainly to Southeast Asia, to teach chi kung in packaged courses like what I did. But what they taught was mainly gentle physical exercise, though they used chi kung forms. Some local chi kung teachers also started to teach chi kung to the public, mostly on a long term basis instead of in packaged courses. But their chi kung was of a lower level than our 18 Lohan Hands even at the early history of our school.

This was the second scenario. Although there were a few different types of chi kung available, only 18 Lohan Hands was worthy, the rest was low-level or just gentle physical exercise. In such a scenario, it is to the students' interest to practice 18 Lohan Hands exclusively over a prolonged period.

A third scenario is that, for some reasons, other types of chi kung though available elsewhere and for other people, are not accessible to a student. Then it is to his interest to practice 18 Lohan Hands exclusively for a prolonged period of time.

Another scenario is that other types of chi kung, though accessible, are not suitable to him. For some odd reasons, he only finds 18 Lohan Hands beneficial. In this scenario it is to his interest to practice 18 Lohan Hands exclusively for a prolonged period of time. This scenario, however, is academic. In real life, it is very unlikely to happen because it is very unlikely that other types of chi kung are unsuitable for any particular persons.

The fifth scenario is that although other types of chi kung are beneficial, 18 Lohan Hands gives a student the best benefits. In such a scenario it is to his interest that he practices 18 Lohan Hands exclusively for a prolonged period. This scenario too is academic. It is unlikely to happen in real life. Although 18 Lohan Hands is an excellent start, as students progress they will find other types of chi kung more cost-effective.

QUESTION 4

On your website www.shaolin.org/chikung/lohan.html#p1 you explain that "the Shaolin Eighteen Lohan Hands are fundamental chi kung exercises" and that "at the Shaolin Monastery, these Eighteen Lohan Hands evolved into a kungfu set called "Eighteen Lohan Fist", which forms the prototype of Shaolin Kungfu today."

Please can you share your views about whether you believe there was always an intention to evolve the set into a martial art at a later date. Why or why not?

Please can you discuss the extent to which the fundamental nature of the chi kung set also provides benefits and capabilities relevant to the martial art?

— Matt

Bodhidharma's original aim in teaching the Eighteen Lohan Hands to the Shaolin monks when he found them too weak for the vigorous task of meditation was to strengthen them. There was a strong debate in Buddhist circles whether the physical body was important.

One school believed that as Enlightenment concerned the mind, the body was not important. Another school contented that though the mind was most important, as the mind was housed in the body, the body was also important.

Bodhidharma belonged to the second school. He advocated that if the body was weak, it would not be efficient to cultivate the mind for the highest spiritual Enlightenment.

He taught the monks the Eighteen Lohan Hands to strengthen them, not just physically but also emotionally, mentally and spiritually so that the monks could better meditate for Enlightenment. Hence, there was no intention for Bodhidharma as well as the Shaolin monks in general to evolve the Eighteen Lohan Hands into a martial art.

Nevertheless, among the Shaolin monks were many retired generals who were experts in martial art. When they practiced the Eighteen Lohan Hands, they modified the exercises to suit their martial needs. I believe it was a gradual process, and there was no conscious intention of doing so.

In other words, the monks who were retired generals did not set out to change the Eighteen Lohan Hands, but because of their martial background, they practiced the same exercises differently from other monks who did not have martial art background.

For example, while performing "Punching with Angry Eyes", a martial art monk might have done so with internal force, whereas other monks would do so more physically. Instead of performing the exercise in a stationary mood, he might have moved about in stances.

When performing "Dancing Crane", a martial art monk might have changed his open palms into tiger-claws, and over time the pattern might evolve into what we now call "Tame Tiger with a String of Beads".

Instead of standing at one spot, martial art monks might have performed the various eighteen exercises moving about. Eventually these moving patterns were linked together into a set called Eighteen Lohan Fist, which became the prototype of Shaolin Kungfu.

The transition was gradual. The evolution from Eighteen Lohan Hands to Eighteen Lohan Fist took many generations. Just as there were different versions of Eighteen Lohan Hands, they were also different versions of Eighteen Lohan Fist, and monks at different time periods would prefer different versions.

Parallel to this evolution of Eighteen Lohan Hands into Eighteen Lohan Fist, was the evolution of Eighteen Lohan Hands into Eighteen-Lohan Art.

Instead of performing "Plucking Star" in a upright standing position, some martial art monks might perform it in a Bow-Arrow Stance. Some of them might find rotating their waist improved their flexibility for combat. Gradually this evolved into "Rhinoceros Looks at Moon".

Other martial art monks might perform "Lifting the Sky" while sitting on a Horse-Riding Stance, and eventually they found this could generate a lot of internal force. Hence, gradually the pattern evolved into "Big Boss Lifts Bronze Vessel".

We in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky. We inherit these gradual evolutions which took many centuries, and derive a lot of benefits from practicing their resultant arts. The arts we inherit are the crystallization of the effort of these past Shaolin masters, whatever that were found not useful were discarded, leaving the best for us as a heritage.

Every pattern of the Eighteen Lohan Hands has benefits and capabilities relevant to martial art, though the patterns may not exhibit overt combat applications.

As a chi kung set on a whole, it provides good health and vitality, which are the basic requirements any martial artist must have before embarking on combat efficiency. It loosens muscles and joints, facilitating agility and flexibility. It generates energy flow which forms the foundation of internal force. It develops mental clarity, which is essential for effective combat.

Each individual pattern has its special benefits, and the following is only a brief description.

"Lifting the Sky" harmonizes energy flow throughout three warmers, which means the whole body.

"Shooting Arrows" expands the lungs and focuses energy flow to the index fingers.

"Plucking Stars" develop internal force at the palms.

"Turning Head" enhances physical and mental reflexes, which are very important in combat.

"Punching with Angry Eyes" was a core pattern that set the evolution into Eighteen Lohan Fist.

"Merry-Go-Round" gave an impetus for waist rotation, constituting an important principle in minimizing an opponent's momentum.

"Carrying the Moon" develops flexibility and strengthens the back which is important in combat.

"Nourishing Kidneys" stimulates energy flow to the hands and legs.

"Three Levels to Ground" gave suggestion to low-body work, which in Shaolin Kungfu is superb though little known to the public.

"Dancing Crane" provides the concepts of dodging and sinking back, without moving the feet.

"Carrying Mountain" develops powerful arms and flexibility of the waist.

"Drawing Knives" gave the impetus to develop sophisticated techniques for combat.

"Presenting Claws" led to the use of fingers in advanced combat.

"Pushing Mountain" is an excellent introduction to internal force training.

"Separating Water" can develop tremendous internal force.

"Big Windmill" is excellent for developing flowing force.

"Deep Knee Bending" develops good balance, an important ingredient for effective combat.

"Rotating Knees" introduces the concept of circular movement in combat.

An important kungfu saying advises that "Before one thinks of combat, he must be healthy first". If a Shaolin student is sick or weak, he should first practice Eighteen Lohan Hands to overcome his sickness and become strong before embarking on Shaolin Kungfu. Having attained health and strength, his continued practice of Eighteen Lohan Hands will enhance his kungfu performance.

QUESTION 5

Which exercises from the 18 Lohan Hands did you personally learn from Sigung Ho Fatt Nam and what do you think was the reason why Sigung exclusively chose them to teach to you?

At the recent Chi Kung course in Finale Ligure I was again amazed by the profundity of the exercise Lifting the Sky. To beginners you said that they should perform the exercise as best as they could not paying too much attention to details. To advanced practitioners you mentioned that they should gently focus on finer points and perform it picture perfect.

Both Ronny and I were simply amazed by the results of this training session. It reminded us of the depth of Lifting the Sky. It reminded us of the constantly ongoing development we are able to experience.

What is the reason that an advanced practitioner after having reached a certain development of skills should focus back again at picture perfect form?

— Sifu Roland Mastel

As far as I can remember, the exercises from 18 Lohan Hands that my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, taught me were:

1. Lifting the Sky
2. Separating Water
3. Pushing Mountain
4. Big Windmill
5. Three Levels to Ground
6. Dancing Crane

My sifu taught me these exercises one at a time, except for Three Levels to Ground and Dancing Crane which he taught to me together. Each time was to meet an expedient need. My sifu also did not tell me that they were from 18 Lohan Hands.

Lifting the Sky was the first of all the things my sifu taught me. Hence, it has much sentimental value for me. After Lifting the Sky my sifu taught me the Horse-Riding Stance.

I did not know why he taught me Lifting the Sky, and as an obedient student I just follow my sifu's teaching, without asking him why he taught me the exercise.

With hindsight, I believe it was an excellent exercise to start kungfu training. It loosened joints and muscles, activated an energy flow (though I was unaware of it at that time), and created a meditative mindset. In one stroke, the exercise prepared a student well in jing, qi, and shen, or body, energy and mind.

When I established the Shaolin Wahnam Association in Sungai Petani in the 1990s, I usually started the class with Lifting the Sky. When I first taught Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Courses I also often started with Lifting the Sky. Now we start with entering Zen.

When my sifu taught me Separating Water, it was for strengthening my arms. I still remember feeling my arms very powerful after just a few repetitions.

When my sifu taught me Pushing Mountain it was the start of my Cosmos Palm training. I was training Iron Palm with my sihengs, when my sifu stopped me, saying my palms were like a lady's. Then he taught me Pushing Mountain.

When my progress in Pushing Mountain was good, my sifu taught me Big Windmill, unlike the gentle way our students now perform in 18 Lohan Hands but in a forceful manner. I remember it was very powerful. I could only perform 2 repetitions with each arm.

Soon I returned home in Penang for a holiday from Kuala Terengganu where I trained with my sifu. At home I tried breaking a brick, and to my surprise it broke. I confirmed my power, much of which was derived from forceful Big Windmill, by successfully breaking a few more bricks.

Three Levels to Ground and Dancing Crane were taught to me to loosen my leg muscles. I asked my sifu whether I could practice sitting meditation by sitting upright on a chair.

"No," he said, "if you want the highest result, you must meditate in a lotus position, or at least a half-lotus position."

"My legs are very stiff," I told my sifu.

Then he taught me Three Levels to Ground and Dancing Crane. I practiced nightly for about two years before I could meditate in a half-lotus position.

Lifting the Sky is a wondrous exercise. Its benefits range from the most basic, like being relaxed, to the most advanced, like merging with the Cosmos, and countless other benefits - like generating an energy flow, attaining a one-pointed mind and enjoying a cosmic shower - in between.

I advised beginners not to pay too much attention to details because if they did they would perform it as physical exercise. They would not be able to generate an energy flow because their mind would be intellectualizing on how to perform the form correctly.

My main objective was to enable them to use Lifting the Sky with appropriate breathing to generate an energy flow. If they freed their mind from unnecessary details they would be able to do so.

Advanced practitioners could generate an energy flow easily. So they could focus on finer points.

There are three areas of finer points advanced practitioners can focus on, namely jing, qi and shen, or form, breathing and mind. Of course they should not attempt to improve all the areas at once, they should focus on just one point or a few points at a time, and progress gradually.

The progression should be in the order of form, breathing and mind. If advanced practitioners can just improve on the finer points of form, they can improve their results remarkably.

These finer points on form include that their arms should be straight but not locked, the palms are at right angle as best as possible to their forearms, their fingers pointing at one another, when they lift up they should do so with the base of their palms and not just with their fingers, when they lower their hands their palms should be at the sides of their thighs and not in front, and they should pause after lowering their hands with their wrists and fingers relaxed.

The breathing and the mind aspects are profound, and should be supervised by a competent teacher. Basically, practitioners should breathe in gently, and enjoy their breathing. It is energy, not just air, that they take in. Their mind should be cleared of all thoughts, and be gently focused on the breathing.

The 18 Lohan Hands are a legacy of Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of the Shaolin arts. It is no wonder that they give wonderful benefits. Like many things in our school, the best exercise, Lifting the Sky, is taught first.

QUESTION 6

How extraordinary (or rare) is it to meet, learn and benefit from a master who can genuinely transmit a skill that brings all the benefits (like we receive) in the 18 Lohan Hands?

Also, how extraordinary is it to meet, learn and benefit from a great living master like Bodhidharma?

Finally, how extraordinary is it to meet, learn and benefit from such a great living teacher as the Buddha himself?

— Sifu Mark Blohm

While mediocre or even bogus teachers are plentiful, nowadays it is very rare to meet, learn and benefit from a master who can genuinely transmit a skill that brings all the benefits (like we receive) in the 18 Lohan Hands.

How would we define a genuine master? The minimum qualification is that he is able to help students obtain the benefits from the art he is teaching. If he is teaching the 18 Lohan Hands, he is able to give students the benefits the 18 Lohan Hands are meant to give: overcoming illness, good health, vitality and longevity.

Unfortunately, such teachers today are rare. Not only many teachers teaching the 18 Lohan Hands do not have this minimum qualification, they themselves are often sick and weak.

As a random estimation, out of a hundred teachers, only one can give these benefits of the 18 Lohan Art.

Masters having this minimum qualification means that that genuine masters exist in the world, though they are rare. Whether students can get the benefits depend on three further factors, namely whether they can meet, whether they can learn, and whether they can benefit from a genuine master.

Even when a genuine master exists, students may not meet him. Even when they meet him, they may not learn from him. Even when they learn from him, they may not benefit from his teaching. Considering these progressive factors, it is reasonable to say that the chance of meeting, learning and benefiting from a genuine master is one in a thousand.

As you have rightly said, students in our school get all the benefits the 18 Lohan Hands are meant to give. I believe that the total number of our students, though large by itself, is less than a thousandth of the total number of people in the world who practice the 18 Lohan Hands. Hence, the estimation that the opportunity to meet, learn and benefit from a master who can genuinely transmit a skill that brings all the benefits of the 18 Lohan Hands is one out of a thousand, is reasonable. It is, therefore, extraordinary.

Why is it that even when a genuine master exists, students may still not meet, learn and benefit from him? The reasons come from both the master and the

students. A genuine master is usually not keen to teach. Even when he teaches, he is very selective about his students.

On the other hand, not many people have heard of the 18 Lohan Hands. Those who have heard of the art may not know of its wonderful benefits. They mistakenly think the 18 Lohan Hands are like any other gentle physical exercise. In short, they do not have the good karma to meet a genuine master.

Even if they have the good karma to meet a genuine master, they may not have the good karma to learn from him. In free talks I used to give in my early years of teaching, for example, some people were convinced of the benefits of the 18 Lohan Hands, otherwise they would not have taken the trouble to speak to me after the talk telling me how wonderful the talk was. Yet they gave excuses not to attend the course.

Even when they have the good karma to learn from a genuine master, they may still not benefit from his teaching. The success rate in our school is exceptional. In most other schools, even when the master is genuine, the success rate is low. Out of a hundred students, only about 10 would get the benefits of the art after many years of dedicated practice.

The opportunity to meet, learn and benefit from a great living master like Bodhidharma is even more extraordinary. There is a big gap between a genuine master who can produce the benefits of the art he is teaching after many years of practice, and a living master like Bodhidharma who can produce unbelievable benefits in a short time, sometimes even immediately. The opportunity is easily one in a hundred thousand.

The opportunity to meet, learn and benefit from a great living teacher like the Buddha is most extraordinary. It is an underestimation to say that the opportunity is one in a million. In reality, for most people it is not even once in many lifetimes.

QUESTION 7

I am so amazed how much value our foundational techniques have. When you taught us the Skill of Bone Marrow Cleansing, why did you choose the techniques from the 18 Lohan Hands (and not techniques from our 18 Lohan Arts, Sinew Metamorphosis or One Finger Shooting Zen) ?

— Sifu Anton

Indeed, you have highlighted a very important point. Our fundamental techniques and skills have tremendous value. Besides meaning elementary, fundamental means very important. The fundamentals are the foundation upon which all future development depends upon. How fast and how far a practitioner progresses depends greatly on the fundamentals.

Many people say that the fundamentals are very important, but they may not really understand what they say. In kungfu training, to many people the fundamentals mean practicing kungfu sets. But they forget that they only practice kungfu sets without progressing to other things no matter how long they practice. Many people may not know what is meant when they talk about fundamentals.

What is meant by fundamentals may be interpreted at different levels. At the basic level, the fundamentals are standing upright and be relaxed, not thinking of anything, performing techniques without muscular tension, and breathing in and out gently. At another level of interpretation, the fundamental of chi kung is energy flow. At the level of progression of learning chi kung techniques, the fundamental level is the 18 Lohan Hands. Higher levels are 18 Lohan Art, and Sinew Metamorphosis.

A main reason why I chose techniques from the 18 Lohan Hands for Bone Marrow Cleansing was because that was what I believed Bodhidharma did. However, I also believed that Bodhidharma did not teach the Shaolin monks the five levels of skills in Bone Marrow Cleansing.

The Shaolin monks practiced the techniques and developed the skills on their own spontaneously. When they reported their results to Bodhidharma, the great master described that one had attained his skin level, another his flesh level, a third his bone level and Hui Ke, whom Bodhidharma named as his successor, attained the bone marrow level.

Then, why do I use the five levels of skin, flesh, meridians, internal organs and bone marrow in Bone Marrow Cleansing? It is because chi kung classics explain that energy flow at these five levels.

There are also other reasons why I chose techniques from the 18 Lohan Hands. Bone Marrow Cleansing is an advanced art. Students must have some prior chi kung experience before attempting it. All our chi kung students know Lifting the Sky, Pushing Mountain and Carrying the Moon. Only a few have taken courses in 18-Lohan Art and Sinew Metamorphosis. Hence, using these three techniques, or choosing some from the 18 Lohan Hands which are fundamental, is most

logical.

Moreover, the techniques from the 18 Lohan Hands are excellent for the purpose of Bone Marrow Cleansing, and our students using them produce remarkable results. Using techniques from the 18-Lohan Art or from Sinew Metamorphosis would be too powerful.

QUESTION 8

Dear Sitaigung,

In the past, you recommended specific exercises to overcome specific health problems. Nowadays, with the tremendous improvement in your teaching methodology, you kindly explained to us that it is the chi flow induced by and following the exercise which leads to the benefits of Chi Kung.

At our current level of attainment, how important is exercise selection to overcome specific health problems?

For example, if a new student has a problem in his lower back and practices only Lifting The Sky or only Carrying the Moon, would there be a difference in his recovery if all other factors were equal?

— Steffen

The discovery that it is chi flow or energy flow, and not the chi kung exercise itself, that brings chi kung benefits like overcoming pain and illness, promoting good health and vitality, contributing to longevity as well as enhancing mental clarity and spiritual joys, is recent, and as far as I know it has not been advocated explicitly before like we do.

We have also discovered that it is chi flow, and not the force training exercise itself, that eventually develops internal force.

This does not mean that we discovered chi flow or internal force. Chi flow and internal force have been present since millennia. Ancient classics have clearly mentioned that harmonious chi flow results in good health. There is no doubt that kungfu masters in the past had internal force.

In other words, chi kung practitioners in the past had chi flow which overcame illness and gave them good health, but they were unaware of this fact. They probably thought that it was the chi kung exercises they performed that gave them the benefits.

Kungfu masters in the past had chi flow which developed their internal force. But they were unaware of this fact, and probably thought that it was the force training exercises that gave them the internal force.

We discovered the fact that it is chi flow and not the relevant chi kung or kungfu exercise that gives good health or that develops internal force. The exercises generate chi flow and the chi flow brings the benefits. If past masters discovered this fact before, they did not publicize it the way we do.

An excellent analogy is cash flow. It is the cash flow, not the job people do, that enables them to repay debts (which corresponds to overcoming illness), and to enjoy comfortable economic life (which corresponds to internal force contributing to vitality).

We need the job to generate the cash flow, but it is the cash flow, not the job, that brings the benefits. Even if they do their job well but there is no cash flow,

they will still be in debt and cannot enjoy comfortable economic life. In the same way even if chi kung practitioners perform their chi kung exercises well, and kungfu practitioners perform their force training methods well, if there is no chi flow, they will still be sick and have no vitality.

Realizing this fact and putting it into practice gives us a lot of benefit. We are able to achieve a lot of results in a relatively short time. It becomes ridiculous but true that when other practitioners need years, our students can get the same results in months!

This background information gives us insight when answering the question.

In the past when I did not know this fact, I focused on teaching specific exercises to help students overcome specific problems. For example, if a patient had back pain, I would teach him Carrying the Moon. If another student had kidney stones, I would teach him Nourishing Kidneys.

Even at that time I was aware of the holistic aspects of chi kung besides its thematic aspects. In other words I knew that while holistically all chi kung exercises would overcome health problems, thematically certain exercises were particularly effectively in overcoming certain problems. But my focus then was on the type of exercise, rather than on general chi flow.

Now having known the fact about chi flow, I also employ the holistic and thematic aspects of chi kung in my teaching and healing. But my emphasis now is on chi flow rather than particular exercises.

The philosophy hasn't changed. But there has been some change in emphasis.

How important is exercise selection to overcome specific health problems depends much on the attainment level of practitioners.

For us in Shaolin Wahnam in general, at our current level of attainment, exercise selection is not important in the sense of being necessary. In other words, it is not necessary for us to select the correct exercises for particular health problems. As long as we perform any exercise, which may be in chi kung, kungfu or other activities, as long as there is chi flow, we can eventually overcome the health problems. This statement may sound ridiculous to other people, but it is true.

To take an outlandish example, suppose you have back pain. If you swing your arms about and generate a chi flow, your chi flow will eventually overcome your back pain!

As an analogy, it does not matter what job you do or what activity you do, as long as it generates a cash flow, your cash flow will eventually enable you to repay your debt. Suppose you just hop about on a street, and people throw money at your feet, which is your cash flow, you will eventually be able to repay your debt.

However, to say that it is not important in the sense of being necessary is not the same as to say it is not important in the sense of being cost-effective. If you select an appropriate exercise to generate an appropriate chi flow, you will be

more cost-effective in overcoming health problem than generating a chi flow at random. Hence, exercise selection is important in the sense of being cost-effective.

To illustrate the importance of exercise selection, we may classify practitioners into three categories, namely beginners' level, intermediate level and advanced level.

At the beginners' level, practitioners do not know enough chi kung exercises or chi kung philosophy to make wise selection. Hence, at this level, generating a chi flow irrespective of what exercise he performs is more important than selecting an effective exercise.

At the intermediate level, practitioners have some knowledge of chi kung exercises and chi kung philosophy. Here, choosing an effective exercise is more important than generating a chi flow at random. For example, if a practitioner has knee problems, choosing Rotating Knees to generate a chi flow is more important than generating a chi flow with Carrying the Moon.

At the advanced level, practitioners are both knowledgeable and skillful. If an advanced practitioner has knee problems, it is more important for him to generate an effective chi flow than selecting an effective exercise. Irrespective of whether he performs Carrying the Moon, Rotating Knees or any other exercises, he can direct chi to his knees to overcome the problems.

If all other things were equal, when a new student has a problem in his lower back and he practices only Lifting the Sky or only Carrying the Moon, there will be a difference in his recovery. Regardless of whether he practices it as chi kung or gentle physical exercise, he will recover faster if he practices only Carrying the Moon. This is because Carrying the Moon is more suitable for overcoming lower back pain than Lifting the Sky.

Let us take four new students, A, B, C and D, for a rough comparison. A practices Lifting the Sky from another school. B practices Carrying the Moon from another school. C practices Lifting the Sky in our school. D practices Carrying the Moon in our school.

Roughly A will take a year to recover, if he ever does. B will take nine months to recover, if he ever does. C will take six months to recover, and he will. D will take three months to recover, and he will.

Other people may be angry at the statements. As I have often mentioned, that is their problem, not ours.

Here are the reasons for my estimation. Most other schools practice Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon as gentle physical exercise. Gentle physical exercise does not generate a chi flow, and therefore does not overcome back pain or any health problems.

But if A and B are dedicated in their practice, they may at times enter into a chi kung state of mind without their conscious knowing. At such time they may have a chi flow, which may hopefully overcome their back pain. Carrying the Moon is

more effective in this respect than Lifting the Sky.

We practice Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon as chi kung in our school. Each time C and D practice, they generate a chi flow, which can overcome back pain or any health problems. D will overcome his back pain sooner because Carrying the Moon is more cost-effective for this purpose.

The example of the four new students above illustrates the interplay of the relationship between the art, the student, and the teacher in the process and result of learning. In any art, there are three components that determine how well the practice of the art progresses and how fast and far the desired result will be.

These three components are the art, the student and the teacher. Students A and B will not overcome their back pain because the art they practice is not chi kung but gentle physical exercise, which does not overcome pain and illness. If they ever overcome their back pain because they may occasionally enter into chi kung state of mind and therefore have some chi kung benefit. B will have the result faster because Carrying the Moon which he practices is more cost-effective in this case than Lifting the Sky which A practices.

C and D will overcome their back pain because the art they practice is chi kung, which will overcome pain and illness. Although like A and B, C and D are new students and therefore do not have the knowledge for effective exercise selection, they have competent teachers who select the exercises for them and help them to generate chi flow.

Should C or D try to be smarter than their teacher and pay attention to their form rather than chi flow, they may not overcome their back pain. Some students unwittingly do this. When their teacher asks them to discontinue performing their chi kung forms and enjoy their chi flow, they do not follow the teacher's instruction and continue performing their chi kung forms, not realizing that they perform their chi kung forms as gentle physical exercise rather than as chi kung.

This usually happens to new students. They do not realize how lucky they are that they have a rare opportunity to practice genuine chi kung taught by competent teachers. These students think they are smart and practice what they think should be done, and not what their competent teachers tell them to do.

This situation is aggravated today where most chi kung teachers are not competent, teaching chi kung patterns as gentle physical exercise rather than as genuine chi kung, and they are unaware of it. We in Shaolin Wahanm may give these students who think they are smart another chance or two. If they persist in not following instructions, that is their choice and they will miss the wonderful benefits of chi kung. In the past I would ask such students to leave immediately. But I have been softened by Western culture, and now allow them to stay, hoping that they may change later on, or leave on their own.

QUESTION 9

At St. Pete, you taught us how to use Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon from the 18 Lohan hands to generate a Cosmic Shower.

- 1. What are the benefits of having a Cosmic Shower vs. having a vigorous chi flow induced by Lifting the Sky and/or Carrying the Moon?*
- 2. There are times when I become tired from travelling and working long hours. Can we generate a Cosmic Shower on the spot to energize ourselves without practicing Lifting the Sky or Carrying the Moon first. If so, how do we go about doing so?*

— Stephen

It is helpful to differentiate between techniques and skills. Not many people - masters or students, in the past or at present - realize the difference, and as a result they miss the wonderful benefits we get.

Techniques have form, whereas skills are formless, though one may also notice how skillfully or otherwise practitioners perform certain techniques. Techniques refer to what movements you do to attain certain result. Skills refer to how well and what special abilities you possess in performing those movements.

The difference between techniques and skills is more readily made clear with some examples.

Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon are techniques. All the chi kung patterns in the Eighteen Lohan Hands, like Shooting Arrows, Plucking Stars and Separating Water, are techniques. All the chi kung patterns in the Eighteen-Lohan Art, like Worshipping Buddha, Reverse Hanging of Double Hooks and Swallow Flies through Clouds, are techniques.

When one practitioner performs Lifting the Sky shoddily and another practitioner performs Lifting the Sky elegantly, the difference is in skills. The technique is the same. Both practitioners use the same technique, which is Lifting the Sky. But their skills are different. The first performance is shoddy; the skill of the performer is poor. The second performance is elegant; the performer's skill is good.

But what concern us here are not the skills of performing the form shoddily or elegantly. What concern us are chi kung skills, i.e. abilities to employ the technique to manage energy in certain ways, such as generating an energy flow and enjoying a cosmic shower. Other important chi kung skills are: having self-manifested chi movements, building a ball of energy at the dan tian, clearing blockage, developing internal force, attaining mental clarity and expanding into the Cosmos.

Failure to realize the difference between techniques and skills results in three major setbacks for chi kung and kungfu practitioners.

The most serious setback is that the practitioners do not derive the benefits the art they practice is meant to give. Because they do not have the skill of generating energy flow, thousands of chi kung practitioners all over the world

remain sick and weak despite practicing chi kung for many years. Their techniques are correct, but they fail to realize that they lack the skills to practice their techniques as chi kung. They practice them as gentle physical exercise.

Because they do not have the skills of using kungfu for combat, thousands of kungfu practitioners all over the world use kick-boxing for sparring and fighting. Their kungfu techniques are correct, but they lack the skills to use the techniques for combat.

Thousands of people think that they can learn chi kung or kungfu from books, videos or even from an e-mail. They fail to realize that even when they have learnt the techniques from books, videos or e-mails, if they do not have the skills which they have to learn from living competent teachers, they will not benefit from their practice.

It is also because of this failure to realize the difference between techniques and skills that many people wrongly think all teachers are the same. They fail to realize that different teachers can produce vastly different results even when the same art is taught. These people also wrongly think that if they know the techniques, they can start teaching other people.

The second setback is that those who succeed in getting the desired results even when they may not realize the difference between techniques and skills take a long time to do so. This applies to only a small percentage of practitioners.

Of the total number of people who practice chi kung in the world today, only about 20% can generate an energy flow on purpose, and therefore practice genuine chi kung with benefits of good health, vitality and longevity. The other 80% practice chi kung techniques as gentle physical exercise.

Of the total number of people who practice kungfu in the world, only about 10% are able to apply their kungfu techniques for combat, and therefore practice genuine kungfu as a martial art. The other 90% practice kungfu techniques for demonstration and use kick-boxing for combat.

Because we realize the difference between techniques and skills, and apply them in our training, we are able to obtain results in a relatively short time. It has become quite ridiculous but true that our students can generate an energy flow or apply kungfu techniques for combat in a matter of months when the 20% chi kung practitioners and 10% kungfu practitioners would take years.

The third setback for those who do not realize the difference between techniques and skills but still derive the benefits of their training is that they are limited in the relationship between techniques and results, whereas we are versatile.

For example, if they want to have a cosmic shower, they have to perform the technique with which they have trained to acquire cosmic shower. They would be unable to use another technique. For us, once we have the skill of cosmic shower, we can use any technique to enjoy it, though we may prefer some techniques over others due to their cost-effectiveness.

If they wish to have internal force at their arms, they have to use the technique with which they have trained to have internal force at their arms. They would be unable to use another technique. They would also be unable to channel their internal force to other parts of their body, like to their stomach to digest food. For us, once we have the skill of to develop internal force, and the skill to direct it to where we want, we can use any technique to do so.

The same technique can be used to operate different skills. For example, we can use Lifting the Sky to generate an energy flow, have a cosmic shower or develop internal force.

On the other hand, the same skill can be operated by different techniques. For example, if we want to generate an energy flow, we can use Carrying the Moon or Pushing Mountain besides Lifting the Sky.

In fact we can use any exercise to generate an energy flow. Generating an energy flow is a fundamental skill. This means that before we can operate any chi kung skills, like having a cosmic shower or developing internal force, we must first generate an energy flow.

Indeed, generating an energy flow is the essence of chi kung. If there is no energy flow, it is not chi kung. It is only some gentle physical exercise. In our school, energy flow is quite obvious. It may not be obvious in most other schools.

In theory we can also use any chi kung exercise to generate a cosmic shower. But in practice certain exercises are more cost-effective than others. Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon happen to be two of the most cost-effective. In other words, if all other things were equal, if one performs Lifting the Sky or Carrying the Moon, he will have a better and faster cosmic shower than another person performing other chi kung exercises like Shooting Arrows, Nourishing Kidneys and Big Boss Lifts Bronze Vessel.

Having a cosmic shower and having a vigorous chi flow are two different skills with different benefits. Both these skills are best operated using Lifting the Sky or Carrying the Moon. But the benefits are different.

The benefits of having a cosmic shower may be classified into three categories, namely cleansing, building and nourishing.

In cleansing, a cosmic shower clears away physical, emotional, mental and spiritual blockage. In building, a cosmic shower makes a practitioner stronger physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. In nourishing, a cosmic shower purifies a practitioner in all his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects.

After a cosmic shower, for example, a practitioner will be more emotionally stable, and he will find the world more beautiful.

The main function of a vigorous chi flow is to clear blockage, especially physical blockage. It is an excellent way to overcome pain and illness.

A main difference between a vigorous chi flow and a cosmic shower in clearing blockage is that although the former is vigorous it is more at the physical and

surface level. A cosmic shower, though gentle, goes deeper, and operates at the emotional, mental and spiritual levels besides the physical.

If a person wishes to overcome diabetes or chronic pain, for example, having a vigorous chi flow is the best choice. If he wishes to clear some perverted views or attain mental clarity, a cosmic shower is a better choice.

When you have become skillful in operating a cosmic shower, you can generate one on the spot to energize yourself without practicing Lifting the Sky, Carrying the Moon or any other chi kung exercise. The procedure is as follows.

Adopt a suitable position, like sitting comfortably on a chair or standing upright and be relaxed. Enter into a chi kung state of mind. Gently visualize or have a gentle thought that cosmic energy showers from above down your head, shoulder, arms and legs into the ground. Let the cosmic shower cleanse, strengthen or nourish you.

This is a master's skill, but all those who have attended a Cosmic Shower course can do it.

The description of the method is simple, but unless one has the skills, he will not be able to have a cosmic shower even when he follows the instructions faithfully - a fact that many people do not know or refuse to accept. It is like swimming or driving a car. Unless one already has the skills of swimming or driving, not only he will not be able to swim or drive a car by merely following the instructions of the techniques, it is also risky to do so.

Why are our students able to learn a master's skill in a course of only one day? It is because the skill is transmitted to them. Once they have the skill, they need only practice a suitable technique to generate a cosmic shower.

Those who do not realize the difference between techniques and skills will have to practice a suitable technique for many years. A small percentage of these practitioners will eventually acquire the skill of generating a cosmic shower, often without their conscious knowing. By that time, these small percentage of dedicated practitioners would be acknowledged as masters by other practitioners.

Let us take an example of a hundred persons practicing Lifting the Sky. They practice the chi kung pattern not as chi kung but as gentle physical exercise. After a few years about twenty of them may have some gentle chi flow.

After a few more years, two or three of these twenty persons may experience a cosmic shower. As they do not have a sound understanding of chi kung philosophy, they may not know that the cosmic shower can cleanse, strengthen and nourish them in their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. Hence, the benefits they get are incidental, unlike us who work towards the benefits purposely, and in a much shorter time.

QUESTION 10

What do we do after our 18 Lohan practice to ensure the healing benefits stay with us?

— David

Practice the 18 Lohan Hands or any genuine chi kung exercise correctly everyday, and the healing and other wonderful benefits will stay with us.

Each practice session should take about 10 to 15 minutes. One practice session a day is quite sufficient, but if you like you may practice two sessions a day, once in the morning and once in the evening or at night. It is not necessary to practice more sessions a day, and not necessary to practice more than 15 minutes a session. But it is important that the practice is regular and consistent.

Different types of chi kung need different length of time for practice. Most types of chi kung need about an hour per practice session. For our chi kung, just about 10 to 15 minutes a session is enough. In fact, it is not advisable for new students to practice too long as this may lead to over-training.

Our chi kung is very powerful. Our students get more benefits practicing just 15 minutes a day for six months than most other students practice an hour a day for three years. Other people may not be happy hearing this statement, but it is true.

If you just do this, i.e. practice the 18 Lohan Hands correctly about 10 to 15 minutes a day everyday, not only the healing benefits of the 18 Lohan Hands will stay with you but also you will enjoy good health, vitality and longevity.

But first of all, what do we mean by practicing correctly? We mean that by performing one or more of the 18 Lohan Hands, you can generate an energy flow. The energy flow is the most important. It is the energy flow, not the exercise itself, that overcomes all pain and illness, and brings good health, vitality and longevity.

To help you to practice the 18 Lohan Hands or any chi kung in our school correctly, i.e. to generate an energy flow from the chi kung exercise you perform, just follow the following three golden rules:

1. Don't worry.
2. Don't Intellectualize.
3. Enjoy your practice.

These three golden rules will answer most, if not all, technical questions you may have concerning your practice, like which exercise should you choose to practice, should you breathe into your chest or your abdomen, or can you drink coffee after your practice. Just don't worry about the questions, don't intellectualize what the correct answers should be, and enjoy your practice which should result in an energy flow.

Because today many people are sick or stressful, they find it hard to believe that chi kung can overcome any health problems, including so-called incurable

diseases. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, all sickness and pain is caused by energy blockage.

In modern language, energy blockage here means that the energy that works all the systems that maintain your life is blocked from doing its work. For example, when viruses get into your body, energy in your body will naturally clear away the harmful viruses. When negative emotions are locked in your body, energy in your body will naturally flush out the negative emotions.

You don't have to do anything special or know how they work. They are natural processes. But if the energy is blocked from working these life-maintaining processes, sickness or pain will result. When the blockage is cleared, the life-maintaining processes resume their functions, and illness is overcome as a matter of course. Practicing chi kung to generate an energy flow daily is an excellent way to clear energy blockages.

Practicing chi kung not only overcomes illness but also contributes to good health, vitality and longevity. After having overcome illness, if you continue to practice chi kung daily, you maintain a harmonious energy flow, which means that all your life-maintaining processes function smoothly. This results in good health, which is different from merely overcoming illness.

As you continue to practice chi kung daily, your energy flow is not only harmonious but also vigorous. A vigorous energy flow gives you vitality. As you further continue to practice chi kung daily, you accumulate more energy than you need to maintain good health and vitality. The excess energy is stored at your dan tian, creating a reservoir that enables your energy to flow for a long time. This means you have longevity.

Overcoming illness, maintaining good health, and contributing to vitality and longevity are the logical results of practicing chi kung correctly. In other words, if you practice chi kung correctly every day, you will naturally overcome illness, maintain good health, and enjoy vitality and longevity.

But in real life, a lot of people who practice chi kung, like the 18 Lohan Hands, do not have these wonderful benefits. The most important reason is that they do not practice chi kung correctly, and they are unaware of this fact. They do not generate an energy flow. Strictly speaking, they do not practice genuine chi kung; they practice chi kung patterns as gentle physical exercise. More than 80% of chi kung practitioners all over the world today make this serious mistake.

But even amongst those who practice chi kung correctly, i.e. they generate an energy flow by performing their chi kung patterns, a small proportion may still not overcome their illness. This is because of one or more of the following reasons:

1. They do not practice everyday. They may practice everyday for a short time, like two weeks, then stop practicing or only practice off and on.
2. The chi kung they practice is of a low level, and the energy flow is not strong enough to clear their energy blockage.
3. They are still exposed to the disease-causing agents which are potent. Although their energy flow has cleared some blockage, the disease-causing

agents are creating a new blockage.

4. Their illness has gone beyond the threshold of recovery.

It is inspiring to note that while not every patient can be cured, due to one or more of the reasons above, there is no such a thing as an incurable disease in the chi kung paradigm.

As the 18 Lohan Hands practiced in our school generate a lot of energy flow, all you need to do to ensure the healing benefits stay with you as well as to enjoy other wonderful benefits of chi kung, is to practice one or more of the 18 Lohan Hands correctly everyday.