

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

# QUESTIONS ON THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL CULTIVATION



## QUESTION 1

*Assuming that if the spiritual cultivator cultivates correctly while aiming at Enlightenment or Immortality or Good health, she/he automatically or intrinsically will become morally upright; Why do some spiritual cultivators become evil persons or black magicians?*

— Dr Damian Kissey

This is an excellent question that can benefit many people. A lot of people equate spiritual cultivation with moral development. They think that a highly spiritual person is also morally upright. This is not necessarily so!

A lot of people also equate spiritual cultivation with religious development. They think that a highly spiritual person is also religious, or more frequently they think that a highly religious person is also highly spiritual. Again this is not necessarily so!

A highly spiritual person is not necessarily morally upright or not necessarily religious, and vice versa, because spiritual cultivation, moral education and religious development are three different issues, though they are connected.

The terms are self-explanatory though, surprisingly, many people are confused over their meanings.

Spiritual cultivation is cultivating the spirit, sometimes called the soul, the heart, or the consciousness in different cultures. In classical Chinese culture, for example, spiritual cultivation is called "xiu xin", which literally means "cultivating the heart". Here, the "heart" is not the organ heart, but the spiritual heart, which includes the emotional, the mental and the spiritual.

In modern scientific culture, spiritual cultivation is cultivating the consciousness, often resulting in developing psychic or extra-sensory powers. A psychic, for example, may be able to tell where lost objects can be found.

Moral education is inculcating high moral values. Although different cultures, peoples and times may have different moral values, certain moral values are universal.

In kungfu culture, for example, betraying one's sifu is considered a worse crime than raping a woman. To a samurai, failing to carry out the instruction of his master was far worse than killing people. At present, consensual extra-marital sex is morally acceptable, though it was taboo in the past in both Eastern and Western societies. But irrespective of cultures, people and times, certain actions, like betraying one's teacher, raping a woman and killing people, are considered immoral.

Religious development is developing the understanding and practice of a chosen religion. If a Christian or a Muslim now knows his Bible or Koran better than before, for example, he has made religious development. If a Buddhist or a Taoist can perform Buddhist or Taoist rituals more effectively than before, he has developed religiously.

Understanding what spiritual cultivation, moral education and religious development are, will enable us to understand why some spiritual cultivators may become evil persons or black magicians, as well as other related issues, like some morally upright persons may not believe in the spirit, and some religiously developed person may be low in their spiritual cultivation.

As an analogy, soccer, tennis and basketball are different sports. Hence, a good soccer player may not play tennis well. A good tennis player may not like basketball. And a good basketball player may criticize playing soccer.

The assumption that if a spiritual cultivator cultivates correctly, while aiming at Enlightenment, immortality or good health, he (or she) automatically or intrinsically will become morally upright, is not valid. This is because spiritual cultivation and moral education are two different disciplines.

Please take note of the following two points.

One, the invalidation of the assumption does not mean that all successful spiritual cultivators will be morally decadent. The invalidation means exactly what it says - not all successful spiritual cultivators will be morally upright.

Because spiritual cultivation and moral education are two different issues, some successful spiritual cultivators will be morally upright, and some successful spiritual cultivations will be morally decadent. Personally I believe there are more successful spiritual cultivators who are morally upright than successful spiritual cultivators who are morally decadent.

The second point is that these cultivators have been successful in their spiritual cultivation while aiming at Enlightenment, immortality or good health, yet some of them may become evil, like becoming black magicians. Some, like modern psychics, may not be morally evil, but they may lead miserable lives, like attempting to commit suicide which indicates that their lives are not happy.

Please take note that they have been successful in cultivating their spirit or consciousness, but may not have been successful in attaining Enlightenment, immortality or good health, though these noble attainments might have been a reason for their cultivation. If they had been successful in attaining Enlightenment, immortality or good health, they would not have become evil, because becoming evil is a natural hindrance to these noble attainments. In other words, as soon as a cultivator becomes evil, he would not attain Enlightenment, immortality and good health.

Why is it that by being evil, a cultivator would be prevented from attaining Enlightenment, immortality and good health?

To attain Enlightenment, or in Western terms to return to God the Holy Spirit, not only the cultivation must not have any evil intention, he must also not have any good intention. Any intension, regardless of good or evil, will initiate the process of differentiation and bind him to the phenomenal realm. The supreme Cosmic Reality, or God the Holy Spirit, is undifferentiated. If a highly spiritual being has great compassion, for example, he will remain in the phenomenal realm as a Bodhisattva, and will not become a Buddha.

To attain immortality, i.e. to become an immortal or a heavenly being to enjoy eternal life in heaven, a spiritual cultivator must have very good karma. If he has any evil intention which precedes evil action, this will affect his good karma and prevent him from becoming an immortal or a heavenly being.

It is worthwhile to note that an immortal or a heavenly being still exists in the phenomenal realm. In other words, there is differentiation in an immortal's or heavenly being's experience. One immortal or heavenly being is different from another, and both immortals or heavenly beings are different from the abodes they live in. But from our human perspective, the life of an immortal or heavenly being is so long that we consider it "eternal".

In supreme Cosmic Reality, there is no differentiation. There are no immortals, no heavenly beings, no abodes and nothing else. There is only an undifferentiated spread of energy, or God the Holy Spirit.

To attain good health, one must have good thoughts. Evil thoughts may cause energy blockage, resulting in poor health. For example, because of his evil thoughts, a black magician, despite being spiritually powerful, is not peaceful and happy, which indicated poor emotional health.

Because of such wisdom, spiritual cultivators must have a strong moral foundation before starting their spiritual cultivation. We benefit from this wisdom. Hence, in our school all students must abide by and practice the Ten Shaolin Laws, which act as a practical way to moral education.

Amongst other benefits, holding high moral values, like respecting the master as in the first of the Ten Shaolin Laws, is in the students' interest. If he does not hold high moral values, he may not be able to attain good health in this world life, go to heaven after this worldly life, and attain Enlightenment as described by different terms in different cultures.

We are proud that spiritual cultivation and moral education are very important aspects of our training.

## QUESTION 2

*What are the benefits of cultivating a strong spirit in both the mundane and spiritual world?*

*What are the various stages of spiritual development? At what point in a spiritual cultivator's progress is he or she "tested" by God to determine if he or she would fail or succeed?*

*Which specific exercises (i.e. Bone Marrow Cleansing, Expanding into Cosmos) specifically cultivate the spirit?*

— Stephen

It is worthwhile to remember that we are a spirit having a body, not a body having a spirit. The body, which is physical, changes all the time, but the spirit does not, until it merges with Cosmic Reality or God the Holy Spirit. The body takes different forms in different life-times, but the spirit remains the same.

The spirit develops, but it is the same spirit, whereas the body is constantly changing. Scientists have worked out that not a single minute part of a person's body is the same now than seven months ago!

As we are spirit, strengthening the spirit results in many benefits in both the mundane and spiritual worlds.

For convenience we may describe the benefits in the mundane world under four headings - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

When a person's spirit is strong, his body is strong too. Some healers as well as modern scientists even go to the extent of saying that physical illness is a manifestation of a sick spirit. Hence, a person is not healed until he has healed his spirit.

When a person's spirit is weak, he is troubled by many emotions. By strengthening his spirit, a person may face the same emotions which would previously make him miserable, but with a strengthened spirit these emotions would not affect him unfavorably.

Similarly, a person with a weak spirit is easily troubled by numerous thoughts. He is frequently nervous or angry and his intellect is dull. Thoughts overwhelm him. When he strengthens his spirit, he can manage the same thoughts effectively. He is able to control his thoughts and attain mental clarity.

When a person's spirit is weak or low, he becomes depressed. At extreme cases, he may become suicidal. When he strengthens his spirit, he becomes peaceful and happy.

In the spiritual world, when a person's spirit is weak, even if he has a big, strong body, he feels lost and afraid. Life loses its meaning on him, and he is bored or even suicidal, even if he has material wealth and social security. This is indeed a major problem with many people in the West.

A weak spirit may also be exposed to attack by evil and low spirits. He feels

afraid, and often has bad luck. If he strengthens his spirit, his good energy which results from his spiritual cultivation will repel evil and low spirits. His good circulation of energy also gives him good luck.

The various stages of spiritual development may be classified into cleansing, building and nourishing.

When a person's spirit is blocked, he becomes sad, nervous and depressed. If he has a lot of energy but his spirit is blocked, he becomes angry and aggressive. Cleansing his blockage sets his spirit free. He overcomes his sadness, nervousness and depression, or anger and aggression.

When he builds his spirit, i.e. strengthening it in quantity, he becomes peaceful confident and pleasant. When he nourishes his spirit, i.e. strengthening it in quality, he becomes wise, compassionate and joyful.

A person is tested by God or divine beings all the time. At the cleansing stage of a person's spiritual cultivation, God or divine beings will test whether he has faith and perseverance. In our school, we do not advocate blind faith and sheer perseverance. We encourage faith and perseverance based on understanding and experience.

At the stage of building his spirit, God or divine beings will test whether he is disrespectful and arrogant. Many people fail at this stage. They become so much stronger than average people that they think they are better and smarter than their master. Like at the earlier stage, in our school we do not advocate blind faith in the master. They should assess their master to the best of their understanding and experience.

At the stage of nourishing, God or divine beings test a cultivator's wisdom and compassion. Wisdom and compassion are the two signature hallmarks of a Bodhisattva. They are also the two signature hallmarks of the highest teaching in our school. Some advanced practitioners fail at this stage. They become clever, but merciless instead of wise and mistake indignation for righteousness.

All of our training involves triple cultivation, i.e. cultivating the physical, the energy and the spirit. Hence, spiritual cultivation is found in all our exercises, ranging from the simplest like Lifting the Sky to the most advanced like Zen meditation.

As we differentiate between techniques and skills, an advanced practitioner may have more spiritual benefits practicing a simple technique like one of the 18 Jewels than a beginner practicing an advanced technique like one of the Bone Marrow Cleansing exercises.

However, if all other things were equal, certain techniques and skills focus more on spiritual cultivation. Examples of techniques that specially cultivate the spirit include Lifting the Sky, Flicking Fingers and Standing Meditation. Examples of skills that specially cultivate the spirit include Cosmic Shower, Cosmic Breathing and Merging with the Cosmos.

### QUESTION 3

*Some of my friends practice or used to practice certain forms of Jewish and Christian mysticism and contemplative prayer/meditation. They have told me that according to their particular systems, once a practitioner reaches a watershed moment in their cultivation, they seem to attract trouble and opposition.*

*The usual explanation given to me was that "demons" are afraid that the cultivator will attain divine grace and get beyond their grasp, so they do all they can to drag the cultivator back into "an impure state". If the cultivator manages to break a certain threshold, then they become immune to these "demons".*

*I thought it was very peculiar, especially since the arts we learn in Shaolin Wahnam are said to protect us from anything from bad luck to hostility of almost every imaginable sort (I know I have benefited from ridiculously good luck many times).*

*In fact, one of my friends who cultivates told me that my home seemed like "a safe place, protected from spirits" even though I just practiced my kung fu there and don't even think about spirits or the sort.*

*My question is: What is it about our arts that make us "protected" and what is it about other arts that, despite also aiming at spiritual fulfilment, do not "protect" their practitioners?*

— Fred Chu

The big secret that protects us from any harm is chi flow. Not only it protects us, it also gives us wonderful benefits. Besides giving us good health, vitality and longevity, it also makes us peaceful, happy and lucky. These are really wonderful benefits that are directly meaningful to us every day of our life. Earning a lot of money or holidaying on an idyllic island, for example, is only a passing fancy.

Other chi kung practitioners don't have this protection or these wonderful benefits because they don't have chi flow, regardless of how long they may have practiced chi kung, or gentle physical exercise they mistake as chi kung. Indeed, chi flow is a hallmark of our school. Irrespective of what we practice, whether it is Eighteen Lohan Hands or Five-Animal Play, Baguazhang or Praying Mantis Kungfu, Flowing Water Floating Clouds or San Feng Wudang Set, we have chi flow.

Although there may be other reasons why some practitioners fail to progress, it may be true that demons and other evil spirits interrupt practitioners' progress when practitioners reach a watershed level as the demons and other evil spirits are afraid that the practitioners may attain divine grace and are beyond the grasp of the demons and evil spirits. We in Shaolin Wahnam do not have this problem. Demons and evil spirits are just afraid of our chi flow.

Why is chi flow a protection against demons and other evil spirits? It is because our chi flow is like electricity to them. If demons and other evil spirits get near us, they will be repulsed by our chi flow. There is no need for us to do anything

extra. As long as our chi is flowing well, it will act like electricity repulsing demons and other evil spirits.

Our chi flow also repulses other evil elements sent by black magicians or any evil elements meant to harm us. The evil elements will just be bounced off.

If the chi flow of a chi kung practitioner who practices genuine but low-level chi kung is not powerful, demons, evil spirits and evil elements may penetrate through. But our chi flow is very vigorous and powerful. It acts as a protection shield for us against evil.

The person practicing our high-level, powerful chi kung must also be noble. If he is evil himself, he creates his own evil energy from within, and his chi flow may not protect him.

How does chi flow make us peaceful? Chi flow purifies our spirit. When our spirit is purified, we become relaxed and peaceful.

Many members of our Shaolin Wahnam Family would know by now why chi flow can make us happy and lucky. Energy masters discovered these facts long ago, and the terms have been established in the Chinese language. "Kai xin" and "hou yun qi" means "being happy" and "being lucky" respective. Literally, "kai xin" is "open heart" and "hou yun qi" is good circulation of energy. When your chi flow opens your heart, and circulates harmoniously, you have the state of being known in English as "being happy" and "being lucky".

Chi flow also overcomes pain and illness, and contributes to good health, vitality and longevity. Pain and illness are caused by energy blockage. When chi flow clears the blockage, recovery occurs. When chi flow is harmonious, good health is attained. When chi flow becomes vigorous, practitioners have vitality. Continued training of chi kung result in energy kept at our dan tian and marvellous meridians, enabling us to have a long supply of chi flow, which means we have longevity.



## QUESTION 4

*May you kindly share with us some of the tests and difficulties that you have had in your own path towards Spiritual Cultivation and how where you able to detect and overcome them?*

— Santiago

I understood what spiritual cultivation meant after I had started answering questions from the public, probably in the 1990s. Before that I vaguely confused spiritual cultivation with moral education or with religious knowledge.

In other words, I thought, wrongly, that a person was spiritually cultivated if he had high moral values, or if he was knowledgeable in religious matters. Later, when I realized what spiritual cultivation was, I discovered that while this was often true, it might not necessarily be so.

In other words, while a spiritually cultivated person often has high moral values, or often knows much about religious matter, it could also happen that a spiritually cultivated person may have low moral values and knows little about religion.

The three terms are straight-forward, though they may cause confusion sometimes. Spiritual cultivation is cultivating the spirit, irrespective of whether the cultivator has high or low morals, is knowledgeable or ignorant in religion. Moral education is being educated in morals, irrespective of whether the person is spiritually cultivated or uncultivated, knowledgeable or ignorant in religion. Religious knowledge is knowing about religion, irrespective of whether he is spiritually cultivated or uncultivated, have high or low morals.

A black magician, for example, is highly cultivated in spirit, but he has low morals and may or may not be knowledgeable in religion. A moralist is highly educated in morals but he may not believe in the spirit or in religion. A priest is knowledgeable in his religion but he may be timid which means he is not spiritually cultivated, and he is usually compassionate which means he has high morals.

Even when I had a clear understanding of what spiritual cultivation was only in my 50s, my spiritual cultivation started early. As a child I was not afraid of ghosts, which meant my spirit was strong.

When I first learned Shaolin Kungfu from Uncle Righteousness, my siheng, Iron Arm Chiew Shi Khern, taught me the Horse-Riding Stance and asked me to remain in the stance. Then he walked away, probably forgotten that I was in my stance. Stance training was painful, but I endured. After about 10 minutes my siheng came back and saw me still in the stance.

"Oh, you're still in your stance. Very good. Now stand up."

My legs were so stiff that I could not stand up. I just slumped onto the floor.

My father's earlier advice that I must respect my master and seniors, and do

what they asked me to do, certainly contributed to my spiritual cultivation. Respecting the master and seniors, and having perseverance in practicing their teaching was moral education, but strengthening the spirit so as not giving up despite difficulty was spiritual cultivation.

This was one of my earliest tests in my path towards spiritual cultivation, and I am glad I did well.

Another early lesson and test on spiritual cultivation was in scouting. Scout Law number 8 is to smile at all times even under difficulties. I was on an endurance hike with my school-day best friend, Soon Hoe Choon. We walked along a railway track from Nibong Tebal to Bagan Serai, two small towns in Peninsula Malaysia, mistakenly thinking that was the shortest distance, not knowing that a trunk road, which was certainly more comfortable for waking, was running parallel nearby.

I was very tired, despite my kungfu training, and each time I stopped to rest, a huge swamp of mosquitoes would gather around us for supper. Despite the difficulties I kept up a cheerful spirit.

The first time I had an experience of my spirit going out of my physical body was before I even started my primary (or elementary) schooling. I was holidaying in Kuala Lumpur and was sitting in a wooden house in Loke Yew Village right in the middle of the city itself. A cake seller was passing by and I could hear him calling out his wares. I had an interesting thought of putting myself in another person's body. I can't remember now why I had that funny thought, and with hindsight it was incredible for a small boy of five or six to think this way. I believe my knowledge and skills must be due to my spiritual cultivation in past lives.

Suddenly, without warning, I found myself out of my physical body. I knew nothing about spirit and body or anything about spiritual cultivation then, at least not in this life. I was afraid. And just as suddenly my spirit was pulled back into my physical body.

Another time I had an experience of my spirit outside my physical body was many years later. I read about developing night vision, whereby a practitioner could see clearly even in dim light, in a kungfu classic and decided to try it. Dark in the night, alone, I lighted a joss-stick and placed it in a jar in front of the God of the Earth in my house. I sat in a semi-lotus position a few feet away half closed my eyes and looked at the joss-stick in the dim light. After a few breadths where I was gently aware of my breathing, I found myself out of my physical body.

Again I was frightened, as I had no prior knowledge about the spirit. I was just practicing night vision. The fright instantly brought my spirit back into my physical body.

A severe test and difficulties I faced in my path towards spiritual cultivation occurred when a chi kung master and some of my own students whom I had nurtured to be masters themselves betrayed me. It was deeply hurting and painful. I remember asking myself many times, especially during long drives

alone from Sungai Petani to Taiping to teach chi kung, what wrong had I done that I deserved such betrayals. I also asked Guan Yin Bodh Satt for guidance as well as to give me an answer.

I received a clear answer. I had done no wrong. I lived an exemplary life, guided by the Ten Shaolin laws. I was sincere in teaching the Shaolin arts, in nourishing students and helping others. I concluded that the test and the difficulties were a necessary developmental stage in the making of a true master.

This and later betrayals were invaluable lessons for me in my spiritual cultivation. It made me strong. Hence, in the recent betrayal concerning unproven sexual abuse allegedly committed by an instructor who had resigned, I considered it a blessing that those who lacked wisdom and compassion left our school.

## QUESTION 5

*We use the terms Martial Art, Eighteen Lohan Art, the Art of Shaolin Kung Fu, the Art of Teaching, the Art of Chi Kung, and the Shaolin Arts. What do we mean by "Art" in this context and how is it similar to and different from "Art" in the sense of poetry, literature, painting, dance, theater, photography, etc.? Also, is Spiritual Cultivation "Art" in either of these senses? Is Zen "Art"?*

— Sifu Mark Blohm

The term "art" suggests two concepts, namely "man made" and "aesthetic value". In other words, any work of art is not born of nature, it is man made, and it is generally regarded as beautiful.

A flower or a sunset is beautiful but it is not an art because it is natural, not man made. A table is made by man, but is not normally considered as art because it has functional rather than aesthetic value.

These two attributes, man made and aesthetic value, apply to all arts, including martial arts, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung, the Shaolin arts, poetry, literature, painting, dance, theatre, and photography. Of course, the term "man made" includes creation by women, like Wing Choon Kungfu that was invented by Yim Wing Choon.

The term "aesthetic value" may be subjective. Karate and Taekwondo demonstrated by masters are beautiful to watch. When these martial movements are performed by students learning them, they may look clumsy. We may call them art only when the students can perform them beautifully.

Hence, martial arts, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung and the Shaolin Arts are arts in that they are man made and have aesthetic value. In this context of being man made and having aesthetic value, they are similar to poetry, literature, painting, dance, theatre and photography.

But they are different in two aspects. One important aspect is that while martial arts, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung, and the Shaolin arts have aesthetic value, it is their functional value that is more decisive in determining how good the arts are.

In other words, how good a martial artist is, is not decided by how beautifully he performs his art but how well he applies his art for combat. How good a teacher is, is not decided by how aesthetic his teaching is, but how functional he enables his students to learn. How good the art of chi kung is, is not decided by how beautiful the chi kung forms are but how well these forms enable practitioners to be healthy.

Another important aspect that differentiates between the two sets of arts is that while martial arts, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung and the Shaolin arts are dynamic, poetry, literature, painting, dance, theatre and photography are static.

In other words, while martial arts, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung and the Shaolin arts are processes, poems, literary works, paintings, dances and plays are objects, though the act of reading a poem or performing a dance may be a process. In this context, we may classify the art of reciting poetry and the art of dancing, etc. in the same category as the art of teaching and the art of chi kung, whereas poetry and dances belong to the other category.

Following from the aspect of processes versus objects, it is the aspect of practice versus admiration. In the first category, practice is necessary to acquire mastery of the art, whereas in the second category it is the large number of admirers that makes a poem, a piece of writing or a dance a work of art.

In other words, if one wishes to be a master in any art of the first category, he has to practice and practice, not learn and learn, whereas in the second category if a lot of people admire a poem, a piece of writing or a dance, it becomes a work of art. This aspect is important for us. If we wish to become a master of any martial art, Eighteen-Lohan Art, the art of Shaolin Kungfu, the art of teaching, the art of chi kung or any of the Shaolin arts, we need to practice and practice, i.e. going over and over again material that we have already learnt, not learning more and more new material.

A master of any art in the first category is one who can perform the art very well, not know much about the art in theory. Many people in the West seem to be confused over this aspect. They regard kungfu "masters" and chi kung "masters" as those who know much about the art in theory, even when these "masters" cannot apply their kungfu for combat or are unhealthy. Worse, due to the public's lack of knowledge of these arts, these so-called "masters" sometimes give misleading or mistaken information about their arts.

It is also worthwhile to note that even amongst genuine masters, there are different levels of mastery of the art. If one practices correctly and diligently a low-level art for a long time, he may become a master of a low-level art, in contrast to a master of a high-level of the same art even when the high-level master may have practiced for a shorter time.

For example, a person may have correctly practiced some chi kung dynamic patterns, like Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon, for 20 years, and has derived the benefits of his practice like having good health and vitality. He is rightly called a master. But compared to another person who has correctly practiced for 5 years advanced chi kung exercises like Bone Marrow Cleansing and Sinew Metamorphosis, and has mastered them, as well as enjoys their benefits like internal force, mental clarity and spiritual joys besides having good health and vitality, the second master is of a higher level though he has practiced for a comparatively shorter time.

Needless to say, it is better to be a high-level master than a low-level master. To be a high-level master, one must both learn and practice smartly - smarter than the low-level master in both the choice of chi kung exercises to learn and the way to practice. The coming UK Summer Camp provides this opportunity.

## QUESTION 6

*Please can you speak on how best to attain the balance between striving to reach one's maximum potential in this life (not necessarily ultimate potential; just making full use of the gift of this life) vs not deviating, overtraining or chasing experiences?*

— Sifu Andy Cusick

An excellent way to get the best results in what you practice, whether it is the art itself or just an exercise, is to follow the five guidelines below:

1. Have a philosophical understanding of the art or exercise.
2. Define your aims and objectives in practicing the art or exercise.
3. Learn from the best available teacher according to your resources.
4. Practice the art or exercise according to the way the teachers asks you to practice, and not according to what you think it should be practiced.
5. Periodically access your results according to your set aims and objectives.

Surprising, or even shockingly, not having a philosophical understanding of the art or an exercise is the main reason why more than 80% of martial artists or more than 90% of chi kung practitioners today do not get the benefits of the art or exercise it is supposed to give.

A martial art, any martial art, is an art that a practitioner can use to defend himself, but more than 80% of martial artists cannot use their art to defend themselves! If they can, they would not take being punched and kicked in free sparring for granted.

Chi kung, by its definition, is an art of energy, but more that 90% of chi kung practitioners today have no experience of energy despite having practiced the art for many years!

By extension, the same explanation can be applied to any exercise a martial artist or a chi kung practitioner practices in his martial art or in chi kung. But let us take an example each of an exercise in a martial art and in chi kung for better explanation.

The philosophy behind practicing a kungfu set or a kata in Karate or Taekwondo is to be proficient in the patterns of the set or kata so as to apply them efficiently in sparring. But most kungfu practitioners (outside our school) and most Karate and Taekwondo practitioners not only bounce about and use Boxing and Kick-Boxing techniques when they spar, they do not know even theoretically the combat applications of the patterns.

The philosophy behind a chi kung exercise is to generate an energy flow so as to clear energy blockage to overcome pain and illness, and to promote good health. Not many people, of course, know this philosophy. Most chi kung practitioners perform a chi kung exercise because it is taught to them by their chi kung teachers. Due to their not knowing the philosophy, usually they and their teachers perform the chi kung exercise as gentle physical exercise.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are elite in knowing this philosophy. By being elite here

means that we constitute a minute minority of the total number of chi kung practitioners in the world.

By setting aims and objectives, even informally, the training become purposeful. But most martial artists and chi kung practitioners do not do this. Hence their training becomes purposeless and haphazard. If they ever get any beneficial results, i.e. if they are able to use their martial art to defend themselves or able to overcome illness and become healthy, it is incidental and after a very long time.

Less than one or two in a hundred may attain these benefits, and they will then be regarded as masters, especially when they may need 10 or more years to attain these results. Because we set aims and objectives as well as follow the other guidelines mentioned above, we become very cost-effect. We attain similar or better results in far less time. Even our students have the results of masters, but our students are generally not regarded as masters, mainly because they have spent far less time to attain the results.

Some people say that all martial arts and chi kung, and all teachers are the same. This, of course, is not true. Judo, for example, is very different from Karate, and a teacher who produces results is very different from a teacher of the same art who harms his students. Unless they are saints or fools, teachers who produce results charge high fees. In fact, as a guideline, if a teacher teaches for free or charges low fees, unless he is a saint or a fool, one can reasonably conclude that the art he teaches is of a low level, or of no value. Reversely, if you want to get benefits from the art you wish to learn, go to a teacher who charges high fees.

Compared to the fees mediocre or bad teachers charge, the fees charged by good teachers are high. But compared to the benefits students get from practicing the art, the high fees good teachers charge are actually low. It is far cheaper to pay 100 Euro to a teacher who teaches you to develop internal force to enrich your life, than paying 10 Euro to a teacher who teaches you free sparring that harms your and your sparring partners.

How does a student know whether a teacher is good or bad? One effective way is to find out whether the teacher can help him attain his aims and objectives. He can learn from the teacher for a period of time to find out. But a smarter way is to access his students who have spent a similar time with him.

If many of his students have attained similar aims and objectives you have set yourself in learning he is a good teacher. If his students not only do not attain similar aims and objectives (but these students may not have this knowledge and awareness) but also harm themselves in practicing the art, you should not learn from this teacher even when he pays you money instead. This advice is only logical. But it is shocking how many students are actually victims of this unfortunate situation.

You should not only learn from a good teacher, you deserve to learn from the best teacher within your resources, of which the two most immediate are time available and the fees you are willing to pay.

Having found a great teacher, or at least a good one, who can help you to attain your aims and objectives in practicing the art or exercise, the next logical step, which generally takes the longest time, is to practice the art or exercise according to the way the teacher asks you to, and not according to the way you think the art or exercise should be practiced.

Again, this is only logical, but again some students, despite their good intention, do not follow this advice. For example, the teacher, who has proven himself to be competent in sparring, has asked students to practice a combat sequence well, and just apply this sequence on an opponent. But some students, trying to be smarter than the teacher though they never meant it, learn Boxing, Wrestling and Muay Thai techniques and spar like Boxing, Wrestling or Muay Thai exponents.

The teacher, who is an example of good health and has helped many students to have good health, has asked students not to worry and not to intellectualize during practice, but some students still worry whether the art they practice will give them the benefits they want, and intellectualize on how they can get the best result from their practice, despite the fact that the teacher has told them that even if they get only 30% of the benefits they get during a course with the teacher, they will still fulfil their aims and objectives in practicing the art or exercise.

The fifth step in the five guidelines to get the best result in one's practice is to periodically assess his results with reference to his set aims and objectives. An aim in kungfu training may be able to apply the techniques he learns in solo practice in sparring. An objective may be to be able to counter a certain kick. So he can just test out his aim and objective with his classmates or with friends who practice other martial arts.

In chi kung training, an aim may be to have more vitality, and an objective might be to overcome a particular illness. Although testing his aim may be subjective, he can generally tell whether he has more vitality. Overcoming his illness is objective. He can check with his doctor, or if the symptoms of his illness have disappeared and he feels fine, he may not even have to see a doctor to know that he has attained his objective.

Failure to achieve one's aims and objectives in practicing an art or exercise can be traced to one or more of the following three factors:

1. The art or exercise itself.
2. The teacher.
3. The student himself.

In our school, our arts and exercises are genuine, and our teachers competent. Both have been time tested. More than 75% of our students derive the benefits the arts and exercises are meant to give. If students do not derive benefits from their training, it is their own fault.

And the students' fault can be traced to one or both of the following two factors:



1. The students do not practice sufficiently.
2. The students do not practice according to the teacher's instructions.

Related to or issuing from the second of the above factors is that students worry or intellectualize unnecessarily. The five guidelines to attain the best results are time-tested. They have enabled many people to succeed in their training.

Indeed, they are so effective that they can lead to over-training. Over-training has become an important issue in our school. I believe it is unprecedented in kungfu and chi kung history.

This does not mean that no one in the past over-trained. But no school has over-trained at a scope and depth as we do. This, I believe, is due to our cost-effectiveness. We are frighteningly cost-effective. Our typical students can attain in one month what even a genuine master would need a year to attain. Many people, especially outside our school, may not believe it, but it is true.

I can attest to its truth from my own personal experience. Those who attend my Intensive Chi Kung Course, even fresh beginners, can generate an energy flow on the very first day. It took me more than 20 years before I had an energy flow like what our typical students do.

Of course, 20 years may not be a fair comparison because at the time when I learned the Horse-riding Stance, I did not know it was chi kung. But I knew "Lifting the Sky" was chi kung when I first learned it. I still took more than a year practicing "Lifting the Sky" to have an energy flow, but it was nothing like the energy flow our students now have. It took me a few more years before I could have a similar energy flow. And energy flow is the essence of chi kung.

Internal force is the essence of good kungfu. Those who attend my intensive kungfu courses, or even regional kungfu courses, could develop internal force on the very first day! It took me more than 20 years since starting kungfu before I could develop internal force.

Again, 20 years may not be a fair comparison because at the time I learned the Horse-Riding Stance I did not know that its primary purpose was to develop internal force. I only knew then that stance training laid the foundation for kungfu training. But it took me more than 3 years after practicing San Zhan before I could develop internal force, and I knew that the primary purpose of San Zhan was to develop internal force. (Now I would say "a primary purpose" instead of "the primary purpose" because now I know there are other purposes of practicing San Zhan which I did not know then.)

Actually it was "One-Finger Shooting Zen" that enabled me to develop internal force, and I transferred the skills to San Zhan. I had to practice "One-Finger Shooting Zen" for about a year to feel noticeable internal force.

Based on my own performance and dedication as well as the fact that I had excellent teachers, when typical students in our school now take a month to attain what took me a year, it is reasonable to estimate that other people, including genuine masters, would also take a year. This is actually a conservative

estimate, though other people outside our school may say we exaggerate our claim.

Hence, it is no surprise that many of our students and some instructors over-train.

What are the signs we can use to say that we over-train?

Over-training is the result of getting more benefits than our physical body can cope with. The signs are unpleasantness, nausea, tiredness, pain and over-cleansing.

Over-cleansing, which is a result of over-training, is a process where we clear away rubbish faster than what our physical body can cope with. Rubbish includes bad cells, pain, sickness, negative emotions and perverted views.

The signs of over-cleansing are similar to those of over-training, thus the confusion, such as unpleasantness, nausea, tiredness and pain, and may also include rashes, pimples, heavy breath and body odour.

The obvious action to overcome or prevent over-training is to slow down the training. Slowing down the training can be in terms of time or intensity.

If a student practices an hour a session, he can slow down by practicing just 15 minutes a session. If he practices two sessions a day, he can now practice one session a day. If he practices every day, now he can practice once in two days or three days. When making this adjustment it is helpful to remind himself that practicing kungfu or chi kung is to enrich his life and the lives of other people, and never to enslave himself to the art. By reducing the time of his training, he now has more time for other worthy activities, which previously he may mistakenly thought he had no time for, like spending more time with his parents or friends, or just watching clouds passing by in the sky.

As many of our students and instructors enjoy our training, and also our training time is much shorter than what most other practitioners spend in their training, a more suitable alternative is to reduce the intensity of training to overcome or prevent over-training.

The very reason why our training is so powerful is because we operate at the mind level. The great majority of other people operate at the form level. Some may operate at the energy level.

Some people mistakenly think that to operate at the mind level, a practitioner has to visualize. Visualization, while in an intuitive state of mind, is one way to operate at the mind level. We do this, for example, in Bone Marrow Cleansing. But visualization is not the only way. Another way, which is often more powerful, is to go deeply into a chi kung state of mind. Going into a chi kung state of mind, or entering Zen or entering Tao, is what we always do, and is the main reason why our training is so powerful.

To make our training less powerful so that we do not over-train, we do not go too deeply into a chi kung state of mind. Instead of spending a minute, for example, to enter into a chi kung state of mind, we just spend a few seconds.

Or we can just go straight to our exercise without first spending even a short amount of time entering into a chi kung state of mind. Even when we do not purposely enter into a chi kung state of mind, we are still in a chi kung state of mind due to our habit, so we are still practicing genuine chi kung or good kungfu.

I tried this method at a chi kung course in Madrid recently, and it worked very well. All students, including some fresh beginners, enjoyed an energy flow. It was not as powerful as other courses, but it was still powerful, and more importantly it best suited the needs of the students. The students were still fresh and energetic at the end of the course, not tired and worn out as in some other courses.

For some students and instructors in our school, even not purposely entering into a chi kung state of mind at the start of the exercise may still be too powerful. The next step, in a descending order of steps described here, is to purposely perform the exercise at a physical level.

This is akin to but not the same as the step described previous to this one. At the previous step, we did not purposely enter into a chi kung state of mind, but might perform the exercise in a chi kung state of mind due to habit.

At this step we purposely do not enter into a chi kung state of mind, and purposely perform our chi kung or kungfu exercise at a form level. This indeed is what most people who practice genuine chi kung and genuine kungfu do.

But this is not what most people who say they practice chi kung and kungfu do. They perform genuine chi kung and genuine kungfu forms as gentle physical exercise as as kungfu gymnastics. They constitute more than 80% of chi kung and kungfu practitioners. Less than 20% perform genuine chi kung and genuine kungfu but at a form level. That was also what I did when I took more than a year to generate an energy flow or to develop internal force.

When you perform chi kung or kungfu exercise at a form level, you are still performing genuine chi kung and genuine kungfu, and therefore still in a chi kung state of mind - at least some of the time and not too deeply. Our students and instructors would have no difficulty in understanding what I explain here. But many other people may not understand though they know the dictionary meaning of all the words I have used.

Do you know why? It is because they do not have experience of what I explain, whereas our students and instructors do. Another way is to say that the problem is due to the limitation of words.

If a practitioner still finds himself over-training even when he performs the art or exercise at the form level, it is necessary to take negative action. He can purposely intellectualize or purposely tense his muscles - not all the time but some of the time. When he intellectualizes or tenses his muscles, he brings himself out of the chi kung state of mind. When he is not in the chi kung state of mind, he will not get the benefits of chi kung or internal force which causes over-cleansing in kungfu. At the end of his practice, he must perform a short

remedial exercise to relax his mind and muscles.

Besides reducing the level of training so as not to over-train, which is described above in descending order, one can also spend his excess energy in wholesome activities. He can perform kungfu sets or combat sequences at a form level. He can also spend his time enjoying with his friends, family or with himself, like hiking, swimming, partying, traveling, socializing, reading and writing. He can also spend his excess energy on his work, like moving goods around in a shop or planning a marketing programme for his company.

Deviating is getting harmful effects instead of benefits from one's training. In a mild form it is not getting the result practicing the art or exercise is meant to give, but not suffering from harmful effects.

Indeed, getting harmful effects instead of benefits is the main problem of most martial artists today, and many of them may not realize it.

Two main aims of practicing any martial art are to be able to defend themselves and to be healthy. Most martial artists cannot defend themselves, otherwise they would not be hit and kicked in free sparring.

Many martial artists become more unhealthy the more they train. Some advanced martial artists realize this problem, and they take to Taijiquan hoping to overcome their problem. But unfortunately they practice Taiji dance instead of genuine Taijiquan.

Chi kung practitioners also have deviated. They may not have serious harmful effects like martial artists have, but the chi kung practitioners fail to derive the benefits practicing chi kung is meant to give. Even many chi kung "masters" are routinely sick.

Both chi kung and kungfu have deviated to a ridiculous extent. Most chi kung practitioners today have no experience of chi, though chi is what they should work on in their art. Most kungfu practitioner cannot apply their kungfu for combat, though kungfu is an excellent martial art.

The five guidelines mentioned above will help them to avoid deviation. Even if they do not have a set of elaborate guidelines, they could ask themselves why they practice their art. Finding that they do not get the benefits they should get, they should realize they have deviated, or their art has deviated.

Even if they do not ask this important question, they should know from direct experience that they have harmful effects, or that their practice is not bringing them the benefits it is supposed to give. If a person has practiced a martial art dedicatedly and is hospitalized for injuries sustained in his practice, or has practiced chi kung dedicatedly and still has to take medication for an illness, it does not demand much intelligence for him to realize that he or his art has deviated.

It takes courage as well as humbleness to make a change to remedy the deviation or at least stop it. Sadly many martial art and chi kung practitioners lack the courage and humbleness.

Chasing experiences instead of getting real benefits from the art one practices is not uncommon. Some students asked me, fortunately not many in our school, why they didn't see colorful lights in their head or feel electric current flowing down their arms. Many years ago a kungfu student asked me how long it took for him to train to be able to jump up a building.

I told them that these were fanciful experiences, not real practical benefits that we want to obtain from practicing our arts. Real benefits are good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys, and in the case of kungfu to be able to defend ourselves or our loved ones if needed.

In the case of the kungfu student, I told him that even if he could achieve the feat of jumping up a building, it was not worth the time and effort he had to put into his training. He could just use a lift, or just run up the stairs.

Apparently my answers made sense to them. They continued to practice their arts and eventually obtained the practical benefits.

Having a sound philosophical understanding of how to get the best result and of deviating, over-training and chasing experiences, it becomes simple to balance the two aspects.

In practical terms, we use the five guidelines in our training. Knowing why we dedicate ourselves to practicing our arts will prevent deviation and chasing experiences. When we experience or suspect over-training, we apply the steps described above in descending order.

We are indeed very fortunate that not only we have inherited some wonderful arts but also have sound philosophical understanding to enable us to get the best results from our practice.

The same 5 guidelines to obtain the best results in practicing any art can also be applied to obtaining maximum potential in life, but we need to make appropriate modifications.

Firstly we need to have a sound philosophical understanding of what maximum potential in life means. We can realize this guideline by reading good books on life.

Different writers will give different interpretations of what they consider as the maximum potential in life. In our school, our interpretation is to enrich our life and the lives of other people.

To enrich our life we need to have good health and vitality, mental clarity, a lot of energy, and a good philosophy of life, like realizing that it is wonderful to be alive, and that we are grateful for being living a meaningful life. Our examples will indirectly enrich other people's lives. Directly we are generous to share our philosophy and skills of joyful living with those who are deserving.

The second guideline is to set aims and objectives in life. The aims and objectives may change according to situations, like availability of opportunities and increase of knowledge or wisdom.

But generally the many aims and objectives can be reduced to two main categories:

1. Increase income.
2. Cultivate the spirit.

It is worthwhile to realize that our income is a means to lead the type of life we want to live, and not accumulate money for its own sake. There is abundant evidence to show that the fabulously rich are not necessarily happy.

Of the two aims or objectives, depending on whether we regard increasing income and cultivating the spirit as long-term processes or immediate endeavors, cultivating the spirit is more important. Indeed, increasing income is always influenced by or even directly guided by cultivating the spirit.

The most basic stage of cultivating the spirit is to be peaceful and happy, and the most supreme stage is to merge with Cosmic Reality, called variously by people of different cultures as returning to God the Holy Spirit, merging with the Great Void, or attaining Enlightenment.

We are not ready for this most supreme stage, though we have the skills and techniques, especially those who have attended courses like Cosmic Breathing, Merging with the Cosmos, Intensive Chi Kung Course, and the Small and Big Universe Course. So we have a glimpse of Cosmic Reality, called a satori or a spiritual awakening, which is life-changing.

In between these two extremes there are countless stages, and we in Shaolin Wahnam have direct experiences of these stages, like feeling joyful everyday irrespective of rain or shine, having compassion for other people, and feeling happy when others succeed.

The third guideline is to learn from the best available master according to the student's resources. As far as I know, there are no schools that specifically teach students to maximize their potential. Our school comes very close, though we are basically a chi kung and kungfu school.

Our aims, which our instructors are consciously aware of in their teaching, of enriching our lives and the lives of others and not just being good at kungfu and chi kung, set a sound direction for our students to maximize their potential in life. We also consciously transfer what we learn in our kungfu and chi kung lessons to enrich our daily life. Our philosophy that life is wonderful contributes greatly to this purpose. Hence, those who learn in our school are really very lucky.

The fourth guideline is to practice what the teacher teaches, and not what the student thinks the practice should be done. By definition, not following this guideline is a deviation.

Some students and even instructors, despite having the rare opportunity to learn in our school, deviated in this way. Those who have read my autobiography will have read about the many betrayals in the history of our school. I did not mention in the autobiography the follow-up situations of those

who betrayed me. But their situations were not good, certainly not examples of maximizing their lives' potential. The chi kung master who betrayed me died young. The president of Shaolin Wahnam Association suffered from paralysis for many years before he died.

We wished them well despite their betrayals, but they could not escape their own karma. The Buddha himself said that he could not change bad karma into good one. Do good and goodness will result, do evil and evilness will result, is a universal truth, and this is a guiding principle in our spiritual cultivation. In our school we do good not because we crave for good result, but because we are righteous, we believe it is the right thing to do.

The fifth guideline is to periodically assess the results of our endeavour with reference to our set aims and objectives. If a person does not attain his aim or objective, his failure can be traced to one, two or all of the following three factors:

1. His philosophy of life.
2. His (or her) teacher.
3. He (or she) himself (or herself).

In our school, as we have a good philosophy of life, and good teachers, the fault is usually the student. And the fault can be traced to one or both of the following:

1. He did not carry on the required endeavour sufficiently.
2. He did not follow the advice of his teacher.

If he is an instructor and wants to teach a large class to increase his income, he may have advertised his class once a while, but did not work on marketing from 9 to 5 everyday for six months. If he is a student and wants to be peaceful and happy, he may have practiced his chi kung exercises learned from our school, but kept worrying and intellectualizing during his practice.

Following the above 5 guidelines will enable students to avoid deviation and chasing experiences as well as overtraining in the sense of overdoing a particular activity to maximize his life potential to the extent of missing the benefits or even bringing harm to himself.

For example, instead of enjoying wholesome hobbies, a person starts drinking and womanizing, it is a deviation from maximizing his life potential. The fault can be traced to the first guideline. He did not have a sound philosophical understanding of life.

He may be chasing experiences, like dreaming himself as a millionaire or spending a holiday on an idyllic island, when he can hardly make ends meet, or works laboriously in a factory. His fault can be traced to the second guideline; he did not set aims and objectives.

He can set an aim to become a millionaire one day, or an objective of holidaying on an idyllic island, like those who will attend the Advanced Shaolin Kungfu Course on the 36 Leg Techniques in Penang in November will experience. The crucial difference is that in chasing after experiences a person merely day-

dream, in setting aims and objectives, he works purposely towards the aims and objectives to maximize his life potential.

Following the five guidelines will enable a person to maximize his life potential. But he must guard against overdoing. For example, he may set an aim to become a millionaire. He may want to start his own business. So he reads up a lot of literature about the business he wishes to start as well as about how to start a business. He reads a lot of books and becomes very knowledgeable, but he never gets to start his business.

He has overdone in his preparation. He has prepared more than necessary for his immediate need, but never gets on to the next stage of the process. He does not understand the flow method.

Suppose he knows the flow method and succeeds in becoming a millionaire. He must realize that becoming a millionaire is a means to fulfil his spiritual cultivation. In this case it is providing himself and his family a comfortable life.

If becoming a millionaire does not enable himself and his family a comfortable life, like he is so involved in making money that he has no time for himself and his family, then he has to reassess his situation, especially his philosophy of life and his aims and objectives in life. The means must justify the end. There must be yin-yang harmony.

There must also be yin-yang harmony between a philosophical understanding of maximizing one's potential in life and the practical skills of mental clarity and a lot of energy in translating this philosophy into practical benefits. The coming UK Summer Camp will provide the opportunity to acquire these skills.



## QUESTION 7

*Following Siheng Mark advice on asking only one question, the most important question that comes to mind is, what do you consider is the Essence of Spiritual Cultivation?*

— *Sifu Angel G. Pérez Oliveras*

The essence of spiritual cultivation is the spirit.

If the spirit is cultivated, there is spiritual cultivation. If the spirit is not cultivated, there is no spiritual cultivation.

Spiritual cultivation, therefore, is different from moral development, and also different from religious education.

These three disciplines - spiritual cultivation, moral development and religious education are often confused. Many people think, mistakenly, that a morally upright person is spiritually cultivated, or that a spiritually cultivated person is well versed in religious education.

A spiritually cultivated person is usually morally upright, but not necessarily so. A black magician, for example, has cultivated his spirit to a high level, but he may not have high moral values. On the other hand, a morally upright person, like one who never lies and never steal, may or may not believe in the spirit.

Being spiritual and being religious are different. Our arts, for example, are spiritual, but they are non religions. Hence, a spiritual cultivated person may or may not be religious, and a religiously educated person may or may not be spiritually cultivated.

As all religions deal with the spirit, a religious person would therefore believe in the spirit. But whether they cultivate their spirit is another issue. Usually they cultivate indirectly, like being devoted to God or divine beings, but if they are afraid of ghosts or are depressed, then they are not spiritually cultivated.

Spiritual cultivation may be divided into the following three categories:

1. To live a happy and peaceful life here and now.
2. To go to heaven in the afterlife.
3. To merge with Cosmic Reality, called variously by people of different cultures as returning to God the Holy Spirit, attaining Enlightenment, or merging with Tao.

Spiritual cultivation may take many forms, like saying prayers, reciting sutras, devoting to the Divine, practicing chi kung and practicing high-level martial arts. But the principal method is meditation.

The term "meditation", however, is a misleading term. It may suggest "to meditate" or "to think". Thinking or intellectualizing is exactly what practitioners of some meditation disciplines, like ours, do not do.

The term originated from Christian meditation, which refers to reflecting on God's words. This term was later applied to other spiritual cultivation systems

that came from the East to the West, even when some of these systems, like Zen, discourage intellectualization.

## QUESTION 8

*With regard to Spiritual Cultivation and access to the Universal Mind, is it possible to seek guidance from a particular individual that has passed? For instance, if a student/instructor has taken your Baguazhang course, would it be possible for them to seek guidance directly from Dong Hai Chuan, to deepen their understanding and skill?*

*If this is possible, would it be recommended? Could this fall into the category of trying to be smarter than the master (not trusting Sifu's teaching/method, looking for better ways to practice, etc.)? If we do our best to practice as you have taught us, does that provide us with best opportunity to receive spiritual guidance (if it is offered), and therefore no additional seeking of this guidance is necessary?*

— Sifu Matt Fenton

Yes, it is possible to seek guidance from an individual that has passed on from this world. This in fact is what happens in seeking guidance from gods who were human before in this world.

Immortal Li was a scholar and Taoist cultivator before he became an immortal. Many people sought his advice with my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, acting as a medium. I was skeptical at first, but events proved that if I claimed to be scientific, I just had to accept the fact that immortals who were previously human existed, and their advice helped when human endeavour failed.

It is only sensible to seek advice from highly spiritual beings like gods and immortals. It would be foolish to seek help from lower spirits.

A student or an instructor who has taken a Baguazhang course from me could seek guidance from Dong Hai Chuan. Whether Dong Hai Chuan would respond is another issue.

Personally I have not come across students or instructors in our school or other schools who seek advice or guidance from the patriarch who have passed on of the arts the students or instructors practice, like Southern Shaolin practitioners seeking guidance from Wong Fei Hoon or Taijiquan practitioners seeking guidance from Yang Lu Chan.

But I know of a senior practitioner from our school who received guidance from Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng who passed on about 50 years ago. This was a very illuminating real story. The disciple did not know about Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng at first. He just knew a jovial powerful kungfu master came to teach him. It was like real life; the master was like a real living person.

Later this senior practitioner had a pleasant surprise when he saw in my website a picture of Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng. He told me that was the master who came in spirit to teach him. I asked the senior practitioner what Grandmaster Law Sai Weng had taught him. It was very powerful tiger-claw.

Some time ago a few students reported that they were visited by my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. But on investigation I found that it was another spirit.

I would not recommend our students or instructors to seek guidance from masters who had passed on. There is a likelihood that other spirits may impersonate the past masters.

There is also no need to seek guidance even if the real past masters themselves come. Our students and instructors are already practicing the past masters' arts very well - to the point of over-training. In fact I have advised that if they could attain only 30% of what they attained at the courses where I taught the arts, it would be more than sufficient for them to excel in the arts.

Yes, this would be falling into the category of trying to be smarter than the master. It is a clear indication that they do not trust my judgement - that attaining just 30% in their daily training of what they attained during the courses would be sufficient for them to excel.

This is different from the example of a past master coming on his own will to help a student like the case of Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng and our senior practitioner. The senior practitioner actually sought my advice when Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng first came. At that time neither the practitioner nor I knew that the past master was Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng. I advised the practitioner to assess whether the past master was good-natured and that the practitioner must make clear there was no obligation involved.

We have become so cost-effective that students and instructors do not have to do their best to practice as I have taught. If they practice daily and attain only 30% of what they attained during the courses I taught them, they would have done well. This is almost a joke. "Ku lian", which means "bitter training", is the hallmark of all kungfu training, including my own kungfu training when I was a student. But now we tell our students, "Don't worry! Don't intellectualize! Enjoy your practice! If you just attain 30% you would have done well. If you try to do your best, you will be over-training."

Yes, if one can attain only 30% of what he (or she) attained during the course I taught him, it would provide him with the opportunity to receive spiritual guidance, and there is no need for him to seek additional guidance elsewhere.

All our training is triple cultivation, i.e. cultivation of jing, qi and shen, or physical, energy and spirit. In other words, all our training, from the lowest to the most advanced, includes spiritual cultivation.

After performing an exercise like Lifting the Sky or Carrying the Moon in a regional Generating Energy Flow class, all students feel peaceful and relaxed. This is spiritual cultivation. After an advanced regional course like Merging with the Cosmos, more than 70% of the students expanded into the Cosmos. This is spiritual cultivation.

30% of a students who feels peaceful and relaxed, or expands into the Cosmos in a few hours is more progress than other practitioners, including masters, who feel peaceful and relaxed or expand into the Cosmos after many years.

## QUESTION 9

*Most religions state about Heaven and Hell, as rewards/punishments for human beings' life after death.*

*Does spiritual cultivation also agree with this concept?*

— Sifu Joko Riyanto

Yes, spiritual cultivation also agrees with the concept of heaven and hell, as rewards and punishments for human beings' life after death.

There are three main stages of spiritual cultivation:

1. To have a peaceful and happy life in this world.
2. To go to heaven after physical death.
3. To merge with Cosmic Reality, called variously by people of different cultures as returning to God, attaining Enlightenment or merging with the Great Void.

Reversely, if a person commits evil, he will have the three corresponding results:

1. To have an agitated and miserable life.
2. To suffer in hell after physical death.
3. To be condemned to eternal suffering unless he (or she) has a change of heart.

Heaven and hell, like our world we now live in, are phenomenal. They are a function of mind. That does not mean that heaven and hell are not real. They are as real as the world we now live in.

Those who do good will go to heaven, and those who do evil will go to hell, is a cosmic truth. All great teachers of all world's known religions teach this truth, and great teachers do not tell lies.

This truth can be explained scientifically. Whenever a person does good, the mental impulses of his (or her) good deeds are imprinted in his mind, or consciousness. When he leaves his physical body at physical death, these impulses are still in his consciousness.

When the time is right for reincarnation, these impulses will create the conditions and situation for him to be reborn. Hence he will be reborn in heaven or at a better station in his next life in this physical world.

Similarly if he has done evil, evil impulses will be imprinted in his consciousness, and will create the conditions and situations for his rebirth. Hence he may be reborn in hell, or as an insect or animal.

As a rough analogy, it is like taking photos with a camera. If the scenes are beautiful, the imprints on negatives are of beautiful scenes and the photos when developed will turn out to be beautiful. If the scenes are sordid, the imprints are ugly and the resulting photos will be ugly.

This also explains why a devoted Muslim will go to a Muslim heaven, whereas a devoted Christian or of another religion will go to a Christian heaven or a heaven of his religion. This is because a person's religion decides the types of

imprints on his consciousness.

It is worthy to know that whether a person will go to heaven or hell is a result of the type of imprints he has in his consciousness, and not a result of judgment by God or Divine Being as rewards or punishments, though to make things simple for those who may not understand such profundity, the idea of God or Divine Being judging to reward or punish human beings for their deeds may be used. God is all merciful. He will want all human beings to go to heaven. But, as the Buddha has taught, even a Buddha cannot change bad karma to good one.

Karma, or what our future will turn out to be, is determined by thought, speech and action in that order of importance. It is therefore very important for our own sake to always have good thoughts.

## QUESTION 10

*One hallmark of Shaolin Wahnam is that we are always aiming at cost-effectiveness.*

*What is the most cost-effective and easiest way for lay people like us to attain spiritual fulfillment, i.e. attaining Nirvana or returning to God?*

— Sifu Leonard Lackinger

The most cost-effective and easiest way for lay people to attain spiritual fulfillment is to take regional courses from me where the courses range from an elementary stage like "Generating Energy Flow", "18 Jewels" and "Five-Animal Play", thorough an intermediate stage like "Internal Force", "Bone-Marrow Cleansing" and "Cosmic Shower", to an advanced stage like "Cosmic Breathing" and "Merging with the Cosmos".

In just two or three days, these lay people will have the opportunity to experience all the three stages of spiritual fulfillment from the elementary to the most advanced. The fees they pay for the courses are expensive when compared to other chi kung courses elsewhere, and they may have to travel to another country to take these courses. But compared to the benefits they get, the course fees they pay are very cheap. Compared to the time they would have to spend elsewhere to have similar results, if they ever have similar results, it is simply ridiculous. Instead of spending at least 10 years, probably 20, they just spend 2 or 3 days!

This way is the most cost-effective, and in my opinion it is also the easiest, though some people may not consider booking a hotel and traveling to another country to take the courses easy.

Will these lay people have all these spiritual benefits stated in the respective courses? From our informal statistics, more than 70% of our students derive these benefits. As a comparison, if they spend 20 years cultivating elsewhere, the chance of them acquiring similar benefits is less than 10%. It is too good for many people to believe this is true. That is their business, not ours.

Spiritual fulfillment, which means fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the spirit, is not just attaining Nirvana or returning to God. Attaining Nirvana or returning to God is the most noble and most supreme of spiritual fulfillment any being can ever attain.

We do not aim at attaining Nirvana or returning to God in our courses, not even in the most advanced ones. One main reason is that I myself have not done that - at least not in this life. I teach attainments which I myself have achieved.

Another main reason is that our students who attend the courses are not ready for attaining Nirvana or returning to God. They can have a glimpse of Nirvana or God, called a satori or spiritual awakening, and return to our phenomenal world.

A third main reason is that it is not a philosophy of our school to help students

attain Nirvana or return to God. Our philosophy is to enable students to enrich their own lives and the lives of other people. Those who wish to attain Nirvana or return to God will have to seek elsewhere.

Our spiritual fulfilment covers all stages except this final stage. For convenience we may classify all stages of spiritual fulfilment into three main levels:

1. To be peaceful and happy in our daily life.
2. To attain peak performance joyful.
3. To expand into the Cosmos.

The coming UK Summer Camp will provide opportunities to experiences all these stages of spiritual fulfillment.