



Question and Answer Series:

Secrets of Building Internal Force

By Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Question 1

Two years ago in Florida, you taught Two-Finger Shooting Zen where we first emphasized proper form, generated an energy flow, and then consolidated the energy flow into internal force.

You also taught Lifting Water where there was no particular instruction for allowing flow or consolidation, we simply did the exercise in a qigong state of mind. From some discussion with other Shaolin Wahnam family members, these two methods are very common in our school.

At the UK Summer Camp in Arundhel, you taught the Baguazhang method of force training, which involved both building force with Baguazhang stances and then letting it flow with Circle Walking.

Are there other such internal force training methods or styles of kung fu where the practitioner alternatively builds and then allows force to flow within the same exercise?

What are the advantages and disadvantages (if any?) of an exercise that builds and flows within the same exercise, versus an exercise like Two Finger Shooting Zen where first there is flow and then there is consolidation, or versus an exercise the way Lifting Water was taught where there is no particular thought towards flowing or consolidating?

Fred Chu

Answer

It is mind blowing to reflect that even masters have chased after internal force for many years but to no avail, yet relative beginners in our school could feel tangibly internal force after just one day! It is no wonder that many people call us liars. We have no complaint that they do not believe us; it is their loss.

But we can't help feeling they are really silly, or really stubborn, or both, though that is not our business. They are silly not to find out for themselves by taking a course. They are stubborn that they are no humble enough to learn from us despite the many benefits they can get. But honestly we are glad that we do not have silly or stubborn students in our midst.

The amazing thing is that once you have the secrets of internal force training, theoretically and experientially, from the benefit of breath and depth available in our school, you can almost train internal force in whatever way you want and still get good results. If you didn't choose the best technique and

the best approach, you won't get the best result, but even if your result is only 10% of the potential, say, after training for one month, your 10% result is still better than many people who get nothing after chasing for internal force for many years.

If you choose Two-Finger Shooting Zen as the technique for internal force training, and your procedure is first to have picture perfect form, next to generate an energy flow, and then consolidate the energy flow into internal force, you have the best approach for a good technique. Even if your practice is not excellent, with you making some mistakes here and there, but on the whole you have practiced correctly, you should have at least 60% of the potential.

Suppose a master (so called by the public because he has taught kungfu for many years, though he uses kick-boxing for sparring) wants to develop some internal force, but he is not humble enough to learn from us. So he reads up from some books or the internet to practice Two Finger Shooting Zen. At the most he could get only 10% of the potential benefit.

Bear in mind that his potential benefit is not the same as your potential benefit, because you know the secrets of using Two-Finger Shooting Zen to develop internal force, but he doesn't, though he may know the external technique. If your potential benefit is 10,000 units of internal force, his potential at the most is only 1000. So you get 6000 units of internal force, whereas he gets only 100.

Suppose you reverse the procedure of your training of Two Finger Shooting Zen. You start by consolidating energy, next you let your energy flow, and finally you aim for picture-perfect form. So now you have a bad approach to a good technique, and you get only 10% of your potential, which is 1000 units of internal force, but which is still relatively a lot compared to what the master gets.

... Now, for giggles, you choose a bad technique to develop internal force. You choose to hit a wooden dummy instead of training Two-Finger Shooting Zen. Actually hitting a wooden dummy will only develop external strength, but because you know the secrets of internal force training, you can still use this technique, though it is a bad choice.

First you ensure you have picture-perfect form as you hit the wooden dummy, next you generate an energy flow, and then you consolidate your internal force. In other words, your approach is excellent, and your performance is also excellent. So you attain 100% of your potential benefit. But because the technique is a bad one, your potential benefit is only 2000 units of internal force. If your approach is bad and your technique is bad, but you still train internal force because you know the secrets, you get only 10%

of your potential, or 200 units of internal force, which is still double that of the master.

For Two-Finger Shooting Zen, we use the form-flow-force approach. But we do not use the same approach for Lifting Water because the method is different.

We still start with picture-perfect form. If you lean back on your stance, or you move one arm faster than the other, for example, your result will be worse, or even detrimental. But we do not actively generate a vigorous energy flow, or consolidate the energy into internal force. We let happen spontaneously because of the technique. By raising the arms up and down, we generate an energy flow. By moving the arms slowly in a chi kung state of mind, we let the energy consolidate, but not as much as in Two Finger Shooting Sen.

What we did with Baguazhang in the UK Summer Camp 2013, building force with Baguazhang stances and letting it flow with Circle Walking, was an excellent approach, attaining yin yang harmony. There can be other approaches. One may just train Baguazhang stances, or just practice Circle Walking. Or he may practice Circle Walking first, followed by Baguazhang stance training.

We did not have sufficient time to experience to find out which approach would give us the best result. But from a philosophical perspective, what we did, i.e. Baguazhang stance training intermixed with Circle Waling, was probably the best as we could maximize the result of building and flowing with chi flow.

There are other internal force training methods and kungfu styles where building and flowing are incorporated in the same exercise. The proportion between building and flowing may vary. Some examples are One-Finger Shooting Zen, Punching with Stone Locks, Grasping Sparrow's Tail, Wing Choon Siu Lin Tou and Yang Style Taijiquan.

In some kungfu sets, like the Triple Stretch and the Flower Set, the first part is ta-chong, or force training on stance, followed by ta-sei-moon, or performing combat sequences in four directions. First, force is built, then it is made to flow.

In our school, having a chi flow after building force is our hallmark. Before this building-flowing concept has been crystallized, I discovered from my own training as well as from teaching students that a chi flow after stance training greatly enhanced the result. Hence in my early years of teaching, students would have heard me saying that if they didn't go into chi flow after stance training, they would miss more than half the benefit. Now students do

not hear give this advice often because this practice has become standard procedure in our school.

... Because of our skills, we can perform any exercise in any approach, though certain exercises may be more suitable to certain particular approaches. We can build and flow at the same time, we can flow first than build later, we can build first then flow later, or we may not have any particular thought towards building or flowing.

But for theoretical discussion, we shall consider three categories – build and flow at the same time, flow first followed by build, and no particular thoughts towards flow or build.

In theory, and for us, an exercise like Grasping Sparrow's Tail where building and flowing happen at the same time, gives us the most force for combat and for health, but it takes a long time. It is also the most versatile. The disadvantage is that it needs skills to accomplish the result. For most people, practicing this type of exercise may not give them any result.

An exercise like Two-Finger Shooting Zen where there is flow first followed by consolidation, is powerful for combat but less suitable for health. It is the fastest of the three categories to produce internal force. The disadvantage is that it is easy to degrade to isometric exercise, often without the practitioner knowing.

An exercise like Lifting Water where there is no particular thought towards building and flowing, is the safest but also the slowest of the three categories to develop internal force. The disadvantage is that it is easy to perform it as gentle physical exercise.

Question 2

How does development of consolidating force influence flowing force (and vice versa) and what are important practical considerations to ensure these processes are efficient and balanced?

Jacek

Answer

An excellent way to answer the question is to describe my teaching of internal force over many years, which will reveal not only the influence of consolidated force over flowing force, and vice versa, but also beneficial aspects, like how this understanding can make our training more cost-effective and how its application can enrich our daily life.

Both the terms and the developmental processes of consolidating force and of flowing force are my invention. These terms were not mentioned in internal art classics before, neither were their developmental processes described.

Indeed, I don't have the equivalent Chinese terms with me right now. Perhaps those fluent in Chinese may suggest some relevant terms, here in the open forum or privately via e-mails or messages to me.

This will be interesting. This is the first time in the history of internal arts, which I believe are unique to the Chinese, where the philosophy, based on practical experience, was first explained in English and back flowed to the Chinese language.

Internal force, of course, existed in China in the past. But terms like "consolidating force" and "flowing force" were not known. The processes of consolidating force and of flowing force did happen, but they were not defined or described because practitioners were unaware of them.

Internal force was normally taught only to selected students who had proven their worth. They had to practice the required techniques dedicatedly for many years before they could acquire the internal force. By the time they had acquired sufficient internal force they usually had reached master's level though they might have started their training when they were still students. I myself went through the same procedure.

As I taught internal force development to many classes for over 20 years, with more than 100 classes a year and developing internal force was involved in some ways in every class, I had the opportunity to refine its methodology as well as to confirm its effectiveness.

One of my earliest realizations was that practicing chi kung was also building internal force. This was not a new discovery but identifying a process, the identification of which contributed greatly to a better understanding and effectiveness in teaching internal force.

I discovered that my early chi kung students, without undergoing external exercises like skipping rope and lifting weights, increased their power and stamina remarkably. The force developed was obviously internal. This gave me my first indication that chi kung developed internal force. It confirmed the saying that “internally, train qi”, or “noi lean yiet hou hei” in Cantonese.

At this time my approach to chi kung was still through form, though I paid much attention to being relaxed and not thinking of anything, an invaluable lesson I learn some years ago from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, over casual conversation. In other words, students performed chi kung forms over and over again, and eventually they had a chi flow. Like most other chi kung practitioners today, at first I thought that performing chi kung exercise was practicing chi kung. It was later that I realized the essence was chi flow, and without chi flow it was only gentle physical exercise.

Later I discovered that if I led students to be relaxed and not thinking of anything, which I subsequently learned was called a chi kung state of mind in modern chi kung terminology, I could speed up result remarkably. This led me to an important conclusion that the three essential requirements in chi kung or any internal art training were mind, energy and form in that order of importance, confirming another classical principle, which was similar to but an expansion of the one mentioned earlier that “internally, train mind, energy and essence; externally, train tendons, bones and muscles”, or “noi lean jin shen hei, ngoi lean kern quat pei”.

This indicates the importance of energy flow in building internal force, or the influence of flow over consolidation. Over the years I also discovered that the smoother and bigger the volume of energy flow, the more internal force was consolidated. This led to my philosophical understanding of the fact that while external strength is limited by size, age and gentle, internal force is not.

... The realization of the influence of consolidating force over flowing force occurred even earlier. When I learned from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, vigorous energy flow was not encouraged, though we enjoyed slight spontaneous movements of “Flowing Breeze Swaying Willows”. When I had started teaching the Eighteen Lohan Hands to the public later on, I realized that chi flow was very beneficial, though at that time I had not crystallized the concept that it is chi flow that gives the wonderful benefits of chi kung.

So with this habit and understanding, after practicing internal force training, like One-Finger Zen and Golden Bridge, I let go and found that I went into chi flow with much increase of volume and speed. This led to my conclusion that the more internal force I had consolidated, the more vigorous would be my subsequent chi flow. I also discovered from my own experience that the vigorous chi flow further increased remarkably the internal force I had earlier consolidated.

I was quick to put this discovery for the benefit of students. So in my early years of teaching I often told students that if they did not go into a chi flow after stance training or any internal force building exercise, they would miss more than half the benefit. I did not mention this statement later on because by then chi flow after force building had become standard procedure.

The benefit is not just a remarkable increase of internal force. It makes internal force training safe, a problem that many internal art practitioners dread. Any blockage or deviated practice unwittingly sustained during the training will be automatically eliminated by the immediate chi flow.

It makes the practitioners balanced. Instead of concentrating internal force at certain parts of the body when the training is focused, usually at the arms, palm or chest, chi flow spread the internal force all over the body for better balance and elegance. Too much concentration of internal force on certain parts of the body may bring a practitioner adverse physical or emotional side-effects, which masters in the past actually suffered from. Yang Deng Fu, the great Taijiquan master, and Dong Hai Chuan, the great Baguazhang master, for example, were recorded to be easily irritable, despite their tremendous internal force.

It also put internal force to its use, i.e. maintain life and enhancing life, instead of just enhancing combat, which rarely happens nowadays. When internal force is focused at the palms or arms, it may give a practitioner Iron Palm or Iron Arm. But when it is spread all over the body by chi flow, the internal force will nourishes all organs and systems of the body, contributing to the good health, vitality and longevity of the practitioner, and excess force will be stored at the dan tian and eight wondrous meridians, to be drawn out for expedient needs for combat or for daily life.

With this background, we can have a better understanding and be able to answer the questions directly as a form of recapitulation.

Development of consolidating force gives volume to flowing force, making the flow smoother and more vigorous. In turn this further increase the volume of internal force, which we may consolidate if we want to, or just leave it flowing. Force, like cash, is more useful when it is flowing, and better

contributes to good health, vitality, longevity, peak performance, mental clarity and spiritual joys.

To ensure this process of flowing force is most effective, practitioners should be relaxed and not thinking of anything. Once a practitioner tenses his muscles or starts to intellectualize, he stops his flow of energy. Not being relaxed and intellectualizing are the two main reasons why a lot of people do not enjoy the benefits of flowing force even when they techniques they employ in their training are correct.

Examples are plentiful, though those involved may not realize it or accept their mistake. They are found in the great majority of people who practice chi kung, Taijiquan and other internal arts.

It is understandable that a practitioner may not be perfect in being relaxed and not intellectualizing. But if he knows the underlying philosophy, he can work on it, or rectify mistakes when he makes them. Don't do anything is certainly easier than doing anything. Don't tense your muscles, don't intellectualize or don't climb up a coconut tree is certainly easier than tensing your muscles, intellectualize or climb up a coconut tree

... On the other hand, development of flowing force is necessary before the development of consolidating force. Otherwise, the training becomes an external art of building muscles. Not many people, including those who eventually have succeeded in developing internal force, know this underlying principle. This development of flowing force happened haphazardly without their conscious knowing, thus denying them the great advantage of accumulated effect daily, even when they may train every day.

In other words, they have ch flow in their training only once a while. Suppose they have a chi flow once in 10 days, with which they can consolidate 100 units of internal force. So they have flowing force which they can develop into consolidated force 3 times a month, and each time they can develop 100 units of force. But they don't have 200 units of force in 1 month, because the force would have dissipated during the intervening period leaving them a negligible increase. Let us say they can develop 120 units of consolidated force a month, which is a fair estimate. If it takes to build 15,000 units of consolidate force before they can said to have some reasonable internal force, they would take about 10 years to achieve this level.

If a practitioner knows the underlying principles, and enters into a chi kung state of mind every time he trains internal force, he will be able to have a chi flow every time he trains, and convert it to consolidated force. If he consolidates 100 units of force a day, he can consolidate 3000 units of force in 1 month as he has the great advantage of accumulated effect because his force building happens every day. Hence he will be able to consolidate 15,000

units of force in about half a year.

Actually he will need less than half a year to have consolidated sufficient force to be rated as having some reasonable internal force because as the volume of flow increases, the amount of force also increases proportionately. But even if we presume the increase to be uniform, he will have acquired a reasonable amount of consolidated force in 6 months, whereas those who do not understand and implement this principle of internal force training will need 10 years! Our Shaolin Wahnam students today are in this elite situation, whereas past masters who had internal force, including myself in my own training, were in the other situation.

Hence, the development of flowing force speeds up the development of consolidating force in an incredible manner, unprecedented before in all chi kung and kungfu history! Not only flowing force makes consolidating force incredibly fast and effective, but also it makes the training sure and safe.

When students first develop flowing force, they will be sure to consolidate the force – if they have the skills. Of course, if they don't have the skills to consolidate force, but only the skills to develop flowing force, they will only have flowing force, like a few Taijiquan masters who have internal force. If they don't have the skill to develop flowing force, they will perform gentle physical exercise, even when their techniques are correct, like the great majority of Taijiquan practitioners.

If they do not have flowing force, they will be unable to consolidate the flowing force into internal force even when they have the skills of consolidating force. Their training may become isometric exercise, like some Iron Wire masters. Worse, their training may give them big muscles instead of internal force, like some Wing Choon masters. They have a lot of muscular strength, but the big muscles may be detrimental to their health.

Such statements may be sensitive, but they are given here in good faith. Whether the isometric masters or the big-muscle masters take heed of the advice is their own business.

... Further, having flowing force before consolidating force will also make their training safe, or at least safer than had there been no flowing force. Their flowing force will eliminate or at least minimize blockage or other deviated practice unwittingly sustained in their previous training session. In our case, even when our training is on consolidating force, we have a chi flow at the end of the session, which will make our training doubly safe by a big margin.

When the force is flowing and you consolidate it, the risk of harmful side-effects is zero, unless you stop the flow by tensing your muscles or intellectualizing. As an analogy, when water is flowing vigorously, it is

flowing force. When it consolidates into a glacier but still flowing, it is consolidated internal force. When it frozen into ice and not flowing, it is muscular strength.

When big muscles lock up stagnant energy, it can be harmful. Your energy which is supposed to work your organs and systems are now locked up, giving you more mass, and forcing your organs and systems, already short of energy, to work harder. If your consolidated force is flowing, albeit slowly, it is alive and not harmful.

You can have a clearer picture with this imagery. Visualize a mass of muscles in your arm. The energy in your muscles was the same energy a month ago. Now visualize consolidated internal force in your arm. The energy in the consolidated internal force was not the same energy a month ago. The energy as consolidated internal force a month ago is now doing useful work in other parts of your body, like digesting you food or clearing away virus.

The following practical considerations are needed to ensure the beneficial influence of flowing force on consolidating force. You must be relaxed and not intellectualizing, otherwise the chi flow will stop.

The requirement to be relaxed is more difficult when consolidating flowing energy than when letting energy flow spontaneously. To let chi flow, by not tensing muscles (as well as not intellectualizing), the chi will flow. To consolidate flowing energy, you have to bring a lot of energy together, and at the same time you have to let this mass of concentrated energy flow. You have to perform two apparently opposite actions at the same time.

The mistake very commonly made by most people is that they tense their muscles when consolidating energy. This may bring energy together, but the energy stops flowing. This results in building isometric tension or building muscles.

How do you overcome these two seemingly contradictory actions? There are two ways as follow.

One way is to use physical movement while you consolidate your energy. A good example is “Double Dragons Emerge from Sea” in the triple-stretch method. As you consolidate energy at your arms, you also move your arms forward and backward.

The second method is to use your mind. While your chi is flowing, you use your mind to consolidate the flowing energy.

In practice, we combine the two methods. After the training, we go into a chi flow to enhance the results in many ways.

By comparison, stance training is mainly consolidating energy. Hence, we enhance the result greatly when we go into a chi flow after the stance training.

This philosophical understanding of consolidating force and flowing force not only make our training incredibly cost effective, but also bring us many benefits other students may not think possible.

Question 3

For combat, are there more advantages in training consolidated force than flowing force? This question presumes that the practitioner is already healthy and skillful in changing between consolidated and flowing force.

Stephen

Answer

If we consider striking or causing damage to an opponent, training consolidated force is more advantageous than training flowing force.

But if we consider other aspect of combat, like throwing an opponent or being agile, training flowing force is more advantageous.

When we consider combat as a whole, I still think flowing force is more advantageous than consolidated force. This may come as a surprise to many people because they often think of combat as causing damage to their opponent, forgetting there are other and more important factors, like being relaxed, having mental clarity, spontaneous movement, being flexible, being fast and having stamina and balance.

I can think of two areas where consolidated force is more advantageous than flowing force, and they are striking an opponent and being struck. However, even if you don't have much consolidated force, if you strike your opponents on his eyes, throat or groin, you can cause much damage. Or if you are being struck on these areas, even without his consolidated force, the damage can be serious.

Relatively speaking, flowing force will make you more relaxed, contribute to your mental clarity, enable you to move more spontaneously, making you more flexible and faster, and adding to your stamina and balance.

Consolidated force, by itself, is detrimental in all the above areas. It is far worse if the consolidated force, which is still flowing, is locked as muscles, where the energy becomes stagnant.

For us in Shaolin Wahnam, we do not face this difficulty because we can readily change consolidated force into flowing force, and vice versa. Although this skill is common in our school, it is infrequent in most other schools.

Knowing the answer to your questions is very useful to our students. They can convert their force accordingly. In practical terms, they can generally let their force flow, but consolidate it when they strike.

Flowing force is also more advantageous than consolidated force for health, vitality and longevity.

Question 4

Sifu, I have been very lucky to attend to many of your courses. Because of that, I had the opportunity to learn many ways for building Internal force. In the past St. Valentines Taijiquan Course (108 Yang Pattern Set) I could experience many different ways of building internal force. I name below a list of the ones that I usually practice:

- Performing Taijiquan Set/Patterns with Yang Spirit.
- Performing Taijiquan Set/Patterns with Chen Spirit.
- Performing Taijiquan Set/Patterns really slow.
- Performing Taijiquan Set/Patterns at the mind level.
- Performing Taijiquan Set/Patterns exploding force.
- Stances (I usually practice 5-10 minutes maximum).
- Performing Cloud Hands walking through stances.
- Performing Cloud Hands in goat/horse stance.
- Performing Lifting Water in goat/horse stance.

My questions are as follows:

Sifu, may you give me advice for the best routine in my daily practice for building internal force? Which is the safest and the most effective way to do it with all the methods that I usually practice? Should I add/learn any other methods in my repertoire?

Santiago

Answer

Congratulations for being able to develop internal force in so many different ways. It is mind-blowing that you learned all these methods in just a few days of the Taijiquan course in Ireland. Even masters in the past had only one method, and they took many years to develop internal force using that one method. Most students would have no chance to develop internal force.

More significantly, we know the three main functions of internal force, namely, maintaining life, enhancing life and enabling us to have better results in whatever we do – in that order of importance. In other words, for us, firstly internal force makes us healthy, then it enhances our vitality and longevity, and finally it contributes to our peak performance in our work and play.

Even masters in the past did not know this philosophy. Hence, they wasted most of, if not all, their internal force on combat. They were great fighters, but they might not necessarily be healthy, and they might not excel in their work and play. Yang Deng Fu and Guo Yun Sheng, the great masters of Taijiquan and Xingyiquan, for example, were great fighters, but they were known to be easily irritated, and did not lead a happy life despite their tremendous internal force.

One main reason why students at the Taijiquan course in Ireland could learn so many methods of internal force training was because it came close after the Special Wudang Taijiquan Course in Penang, where the highest Taijiquan, in fact the highest kungfu, was taught, including many methods of internal force training. As many Shaolin Wahnam students know, my teaching methodology is progressive, which means that the benefits of the teaching methodology at the Wudang Taijiquan Course was carried over to 108-Pattern Taijiquan Course in Ireland.

My best advice, though it may sound odd to many students, including you, is not to over-practice. Actually what you are practicing now is more than enough. You should practice less, and spend more time with your girlfriend or girlfriends. In your case, the phrase “less is more” is very appropriate. By training less, you will actually get more benefits, both in kungfu and in your daily life.

As you know many different force training methods, you can take turn to train one method a day. You can find out from direct experience which method will give you more benefit or more joy, bearing in mind that the result may change through time or circumstances.

... Any one of the methods you mentioned above is an excellent method. Because of your skills and philosophical understanding, even if you had chosen the worse of the above methods (even this worst method is still a very good method) and your practice is only mediocre, your results will still be better than the results of most practitioners, including some masters.

Other people reading my comment may think we are boastful, and may become angry, but the comment is true. How many people practicing Taijiquan today have internal force? Even those few masters who have internal force will take a year to acquire what you can acquire in a month. Let's say they acquire 12,000 units of internal force in one year, which you can acquire in a month. Even if your result is mediocre and you attain only 40% of your potential, you still acquire 4,800 units of internal force, whereas the masters working at their best acquire only 1.000 units a month.

In our school all the methods are safe. This is because of our chi flow. But this is not so for most practitioners in other schools. Many practitioners,

especially advanced ones, are constantly concerned that they do not train wrongly. It may be a surprise to many people in the West, but in fact a main reason why many Chinese are afraid to train any internal art is a fear of deviation, known by a frightening term in Chinese as “escaping of fire and entering of devil”.

In our school, “escaping of fire and entering of devil”, or its less frightening modern term of “deviation”, is effectively prevented, or erased had it happened, by our chi flow, unless a practitioner over-trains or excessively intellectualizes.

Of the methods mentioned by you, if all other things were equal, the one that is most easily practiced wrongly is performing Taijiquan at the mind level. The second most easily practiced wrongly is performing Taijiquan very, very slowly. But if practiced correctly, they are the ones that are most effective in producing tremendous internal force respectively.

The safest method is performing Taijiquan in Yang spirit. If all other things were equal, it is also the method that, relatively, produces the least internal force. But other things are not equal. Even when you use this method, you will produce more internal force than practitioners in other schools performing at the mind level or performing very, very slowly, in which case they have high risks of harmful side-effects.

Though it is not necessary, if you have the opportunities and within your means, it is, of course, beneficial to add or learn new methods to your repertoire. Not only you have new methods, they will also give you breadth and depth.

Question 5

You mentioned on your website that you believed past masters like the Venerable Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng were all rounders. And how their general level in terms of arm sensitivity or Iron Arm was of a higher level than masters who were particularly known for those arts (like Yim Wing Choon).

My question's are:

How did the Venerable Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng achieve this?

Was it from practicing many force training methods as opposed to only one or two methods?

Is it unfavorable to practice only one or two methods as opposed to many over one's Kungfu career?

Sham.

Answer

Hoong Hei Khoon was famous for his powerful punch. He developed his tremendous power using the triple-stretch method. Yim Wing Choon was noted for her internal force. She developed her internal force by practicing Siu Lin Tou. Thiet Kiew Sam was well known for his powerful arms. He developed his powerful arms by practicing the Iron Wire Set.

These masters famous for their particular arts were associated with their particular ways of training with their specialized sets – Hoong Hei Khoon with the Triple-Stretch Set, Yim Wing Choon with Siu Lin Tou, and Thiet Kiew Sam with Iron Wire Set.

On the other hand, kungfu geniuses like the Venerable Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng were not specially associated with any particular arts. They were all rounders. In other words, when we think of Hoong Hei Khoon, we think of his powerful punch. When we think of Yim Wing Choon, we think of Siu Lin Tou. When we think of Thiet Kiew Sam, we think of his powerful arms.

But when we think of the Venerable Ng Mui or Zhang San Feng, we do not think of any particular art to be associated with them, though Ng Mui's specialty was the Flower Set, and Zhang San Feng's specialty was Wudang Shaolin Kungfu, which is now better known as Wudang Taijiquan. This is because they were good at everything that no single art stood out for them.

Even in the arts the other masters were famous for, Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng were still better than them. Ng Mui's and Zhang San Feng's punch, for example, was more powerful than Hoong Hei Khoon's punch, and Ng Mui's and Zhang San Feng's arms were more powerful than Thiet Kiew Sam's arms. Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng did not practice Siu Lin Tou, which was invented later by Yim Wing Choon. Yet I believe that having seen Siu Lin Tou once, Ng Mui's performance and Zhang San Feng's performance of Siu Lin Tou would be better than Yim Wing Choon's performance.

... It is inspiring to note that such a situation also occurs in our school, not even amongst our masters but just amongst our students. I do not mean to be presumptuous, but I honestly believe that those students who attended our Baguazhang course as a supplementary art for just a few days are better at Baguazhang than students elsewhere who specially practice Baguazhang for many years. The same situation applies for other supplementary arts like Tantui, Eagle Claw, Praying Mantis, Iron Wire, Wuzuquan, Xingyiquan, Wing Choon and Choy-Li-Fatt.

We have more than enough material to justify our claim. How many students elsewhere who have practiced the relevant arts for many years have the type of internal force related to their arts, and can apply their arts for combat? How many students elsewhere have the skills specially associated with their arts, like getting to the back of opponents in Baguazhang, or being able to respond correctly even when blink-folded in Wing Choon Kungfu? How many students elsewhere have a sound philosophical understanding of their art? Most, if not all, our students who attended these supplementary courses have these abilities.

How were Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng better than the other masters in their latter's specialties? How are our students better than students elsewhere in their arts? The answer is spread and depth. Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng had spread and depth. Our students have spread and depth, whereas students elsewhere spend their time on only the external form of their art.

Yes, one of the reason why Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng achieved this superiority in spread and depth was practicing many force-training methods as opposed to only one or two methods. I believe that Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng, being kungfu geniuses, would have practiced all the force-training methods in Shaolin and even elsewhere, such as triple-stretch, the force-approach, the flow-approach, One-Finger Shooting Zen, Eighteen-Lohan Art and Sinew Metamorphosis.

More significantly, being a Buddhist nun and a Taoist priest respectively, Ng Mui and Zhang San Feng would have practiced mediation deeply. I recall the advice of my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, that if one wishes to soar the heights and depths of kungfu, he should practice chi kung; if he wishes to soar the heights

and depths of chi kung, he should practice meditaion.

For most other people it is unfavorable to practice many methods at the same time because the different methods will cancel the effect of one another. But for us in Shaolin Wahnam and for kungfu geniuses, it is favorable to practice many methods at the same time because these different methods will enhance the effect of one another. This is because of the magic of chi flow.

Question 6

My experience with building internal force has clearly demonstrated the fact that internal force has benefitted my physical/external body - health, endurance, strength. I have also noticed that when I maintain a moderate level of external stimulus (physical labor/construction job, cycling, rock climbing, heavy yard work - moving rocks, etc), there seems to be a cross over benefit to my internal training (i.e. stance training is more relaxed and at a deeper level, condensing force feels more powerful, etc). I have experienced the opposite to also be true, and if my lifestyle is too sedentary, it seems to have a negative impact on my internal training.

Is there a link between external stimulus and building internal force? Typically, Water Buffalo methods are used to build external strength, but can they also be used as an adjunct to internal force training, for even more benefit?

Sifu Matt Fenton

Answer

Internal force certainly benefits the physical or external body. If all other things were equal, internal force contributes more to health, endurance and strength than external strength. Indeed, some forms of external training, like lifting weights and jabbing palms into iron filing, can be detrimental to health, although they may contribute to strength and endurance.

On the other hand, a moderate level of external stimulus, like physical labor and moving rocks, can enhance internal training, provided that the external stimulus is not overdone. This benefit leads to the recommendation known in Chinese (Cantonese) as “noi ngoi seong sau”, or “internal-external double cultivation”.

Great kungfu masters in the past were known for their internal-external double cultivation, never just cultivated internally. However, their external cultivation did not refer to such external methods like lifting weights, jabbing palms into iron filing, hitting sand-bags and striking wooden-man, which were regarded as third-class methods, but referred to methods like performing kungfu sequences or sets, Children’s Art, Thousand Steps and Art of Flexibility.

If a master, for example, performed only Abdominal Breathing, which was considered internal cultivation, but neglected the practice of his kungfu sets, which was considered external cultivation, he would not be very advanced.

He might have a lot of internal force from his Abdominal Breathing, but lacked agility which could be derived from set-practice.

If a person's lifestyle is too sedentary, he would not be healthy. The great Chinese physician, Hua Tuo, described this condition as "a door not in use would soon rot".

Yes, there is a link between external stimulus and building internal force. They contribute to yin-yang harmony.

Water buffalo methods, when used judiciously, can be used as an adjunct to internal force training. For example, after practicing Golden Bridge for some time, which develops internal force, a practitioner may place a staff over his extended arms, hanging some light weights at both ends of the staff. The added weight will enhance his training, enabling him to achieve more internal force in a shorter time.

Strictly speaking, this is not water buffalo training; it is smart training. If the practitioner started with the staff and weights at the beginning, and tensed the muscles of his arms to support the weights, he could develop external strength and endurance, but it would be water buffalo training. He would develop more internal force, compared to his external strength, and in a shorter time, had he not used the weights at all.

Similarly, those who have developed internal force using the Iron Wire Set, may wear copper rings in their forearms to enhance their training. But had they used copper rings at the start and performed Iron Wire with muscular strength, it would become water buffalo training. They would have big muscles and be powerful with external strength, but it was not internal force.

I myself underwent water buffalo training, like practicing Iron Palm, hitting wooden-man and jabbing my hands into beans. But I found internal cultivation far superior. It produced a lot more internal force. Not only my internal force enabled me to break bricks (instead of opponents' bones) and take punches and kicks without sustaining injury, but more significantly it contributed to my health, vitality and longevity, and daily peak performance.

Question 7

There is a lot of misinformation in the world about internal force. For example, both the Sanchin of Karate and the San Zhan of Wuzuquan from which it was derived have both been described as "dynamic tension" exercises by sources claiming to be authoritative.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_tension

Iron Wire has been described as "qigong" meaning "meditative breathing" combined with isometric exercise/dynamic tension:

“The Iron Wire form is essentially a combination of Hei Gung (Chinese: 气功; pinyin: qigong) or meditative breathing with isometric exercise, particularly dynamic tension, although weights were also used in traditional practice in the form of iron rings worn on the wrists. If properly practiced, it can increase strength considerably and promote a stable root. However as with both most forms of qigong and most forms of isometric exercise, it must be practiced regularly or the benefits are quickly lost. “

Please can you define the difference between dynamic tension and internal force?

Please can you describe the difference in benefits a practitioner will gain from attending this course, “Secrets of Building Internal Froce”. vs. a course on dynamic tension?

Sifu Andy Cusick

Answer

It is indeed sad, and shocking, that much misinformation about internal force and other aspects of internal arts is regarded by the ignorant public as authoritative given by people wrongly regarded as “masters”.

Sometimes the misinformation is ridiculous, and even hilarious. In my early years of teaching chi kung in Germany, a student told me that a famous chi kung “master” told him that he should not look at things, including pretty girls, for doing so would cause energy escaping from his eyes! “If you can’t even look at pretty girls, why do you practice chi kung then?” I asked him.

When I was in Canada, some students told me that their teacher, who was a world known chi kung “master”, forbid them to take sugar. This teacher would be shocked to know that I put three sachets of sugar into my coffee.

Indeed, when I first taught in Spain, many students were shocked to see the quantity of sugar I put into my drinks. Later when they found that I was still alive and kicking despite the sugar, they fed me with delicious ham.

Performing Sanchin of Karate or San Zhan of Wuzuquan as dynamic tension exercise is not only shocking, though it is often done, but is also dangerous. A student, who practiced Karate before, told me that his former Karate teacher advised him not to practice Sanchin often as it shortened his life. I wonder why the Karate teacher taught Sanchin in the first place.

Describing qigong as meditative breathing is incorrect. While meditative breathing may be used in some forms of chi kung, there are many forms of chi kung where practitioners are not concerned about their breathing, meditative or otherwise. Practicing Iron Wire with isometric exercise or dynamic tension is dangerous, especially when the harm is insidious. But many “masters” actually do that, developing big muscles instead of internal force.

It is true that if it is properly practiced, whether as genuine internal art or as isometric exercise, it can increase strength considerably and promote a stable root, the strength and root will be greater when practiced as an internal art besides more important benefits like good health, vitality and longevity. But it is not true when Iron Wire is correctly practiced as an internal art that its benefits are quickly lost. This is only true when it is wrongly practiced as isometric exercise.

In dynamic tension, muscles are tensed to produce strength. If the muscles are not tensed, strength is not produced. The amount of strength produced is related to the size of the muscles as well as the speed of muscular movement. The bigger the muscles, and the faster the speed, the more strength is produced.

Dynamic tension restricts energy flow, causing blockage which is detrimental to health. Dynamic tension is also stressful to the mind, or spirit. It “locks” the spirit, making the practitioner constraint, irritable or angry.

In internal force training, it is very important to be relaxed. Muscular tension blocks energy flow, which will stop the flow of internal force. The more relaxed a practitioner is, the greater will the internal force generated. This is quite incomprehensible to many people, as they are used to the concept of muscular strength which requires tensing muscles, and ignorant of the concept of internal force. When a person is relaxed, together with internal force, he will produce better result no matter what he does.

... Internal force training not only sets the spirit free, but also strengthens it. Hence, the practitioner feels liberated, peaceful and happy. Internal force training contributes to good health, vitality and longevity, whereas dynamic tension is detrimental.

As the name of the course reveals, course participants will learn the secrets of building internal force. Whether course participants will learn the secrets of dynamic tension depends on whether the teacher is competent. As most chi kung and kungfu teachers today are incompetent, not even knowing that what they teach are gentle physical exercise and gymnastics instead of genuine chi kung and genuine kingfu, and as this course is in the context of chi kung and kungfu, it is reasonable to believe that getting a competent teacher to teach dynamic tension is difficult.

Even if such a competent teacher is available, why would anyone take a course on dynamic tension when a course on internal force, which is far superior, is available? Nevertheless, comparison with dynamic tension will be made when discussing the benefits participants get from the internal force course.

It is worth the effort and time to learn the secrets of building internal force because internal force is very beneficial. It is unnecessary to learn the secrets of dynamic tension because it is detrimental to health, vitality and longevity. Even the benefits dynamic tension can give, like strength and endurance, are inferior to the relevant benefits from internal force.

In the internal force course participants learn the two main methods of building internal force, i.e. the flow method and the force method. When they have acquired the two skills, they can apply them to almost any techniques. For example, in Iron Wire, the standard way is to consolidate force using the force method, but course participants may even use the flow method. In Yang Style Taijiquan, the standard way is to increase energy flow using the flow method, but course participants may use the force method. This, I believe, is unprecedented in the whole history of chi kung and kungfu.

I do not know much about dynamic tension, but I believe there is only one method, which is tensing the muscles and relaxing them. I am doubtful that when one has acquired the skill of dynamic tension, he may apply the skill to other methods, if any. I believe many practitioners of dynamic tension may not even differentiate between skills and techniques and benefits.

There are countless benefits in internal force, but all these benefits may be classified into three categories:

1. To maintain life.
2. To enhance life.
3. To have better result in whatever we do.

When disease-causing agents, like virus and negative emotions, get into our body, we remove them with our internal force, usually without our conscious awareness. This is an example of maintaining life.

When previously you became mentally tired easily and panting for breaths after some physical activities, now you can enjoy your work and play for a long time without becoming tired or panting for breaths. This is an example of enhancing life.

Previously you had to read over a page a few times and yet did not know what the author was writing. Now you read over the page once and comprehend clearly. This is an example of enabling you to have better result no matter what you do.

Apart from professions where big muscles count, like being a bouncer or a porter, and appearing muscular to other people, there are not many benefits of training in dynamic tension besides strength and endurance, which are still inferior to strength and endurance derived from internal force.

Training dynamic tension does not maintain life. In fact, it distracts from life. Energy that is meant to nourish internal organs is diverted to build big muscles.

Training dynamic tension does not enhance life. In fact, it distract from life. The internal organs and systems of dynamic tension builders have to work harder to compensate for the additional big muscles.

Training dynamic tension does not enable practitioners to have better result in what they do. In fact, they would do worse. After a dynamic tension session, practitioners have less mental clarity, due to the mental stress of the training, and less energy, due to energy being used up in the training. They would have to rest for some time to recover before they can perform their normal mental and physical work.

Hence, the difference in benefits participants get from an internal force course and from a dynamic tension course is great. It is not often that people have an opportunity to attend a course on “Secrets of Building Internal Force”. Needless to say, course participants do not just learn the secrets, they reap the benefits of internal force even during the course itself.

Question 8

Please could you explain what internal force actually is in its various forms and how these forms are similar or different? I would be very grateful to understand how these forms may feel to the practitioner and what their respective benefits are?

Matthew

Answer

The term “internal force” is self-explanatory. It is force from inside.

Yet, no matter how well and accurately it is explained, those who have no experience of internal force will not understand the explanation.

Many terms fall under this category, i.e. they need direct experience to understand them. Take the word “love”. One may describe love as a many-splendid thing, or as so many types of chemicals produced in a lover’s body, but unless and until a person has experienced love, he will not understand what it is although he understands the dictionary meaning of all the words in the descriptions.

Past masters described the training of internal force as the training of essence, energy and spirit, whereas the training of external force as the training of tendons, bones and muscles. If you do leg stretching, hit your arms against a wooden man, and practice with weights, you train external force. If you practice stance training, meditation and Abdominal Breathing, you train internal force.

Hence, there are three different types of internal force due to the three different ways it is developed. They are internal force of jing, of qi and of shen, or internal force of essence, of energy and of mind.

These three types are similar in that they are all developed through internal cultivation. They are different in that they are developed through different aspect, that of essence, energy and mind.

It is worthy of note that the classification into essence, energy and mind is for convenience and is a matter of emphasis. All the three aspects are involved in all the three different cultivations, but one particular aspect is emphasized. For example, in the cultivation of essence, energy and mind are needed, but in this particular type of cultivation essence is emphasized. Similarly in the cultivation of energy, essence and mind are needed but energy is emphasized,

and in the cultivation of mind, essence and energy are needed but mind is emphasized.

Essence refers to the finest particle of the practitioner. In modern term, it refers to sub-atomic particles. Of the three aspects, it is the one that has form. Because of the limited vision of our eyes, we may not see the form of individual sub-atomic particles, but it is present. We see the collection of trillions of sub-atomic particles as a person. Energy and mind are formless.

In the internal training of jing or essence, a practitioner enters into a heightened state of mind and remains in a special poise, usually, static, to let his sub-atomic particles be charged with energy. A good example is Golden Bridge. As result the practitioner becomes powerful, without having to tense his muscles, and is able to perform more efficiently any activities, especially physical activities, including sparring and demonstrations like breaking bricks.

In the internal training of qi or energy, a practitioner enters into a heightened state of mind and often, but nor necessarily, remains in a static poise to regulate his energy flow, often mistranslated as breathing, to enable the energy flow to harmonious and vigorous. A good example is Abdominal Breathing. As a result, the practitioner has a lot of energy which gives him good health, vitality and longevity.

In the internal training of shen or mind, a practitioner enters into a heightened state of consciousness, lets his energy flow be spontaneous, usually but not necessarily always in a static position like standing upright or seated in a lotus position, and cultivates his mind by taming, building and nourishing it. A good example is Standing Meditation. As a result the practitioner attains mental freshness and clarity, and at higher levels, attain spiritual awakenings irrespective of religion.

Past masters also classified internal force cultivation into three categories, namely qinggong, qigong and yingong, or art of lightness, art of energy, and art of hardness.

Please take note that these classifications are meant for convenience, and not rigid compartmentalization. There is often much over-lapping. Cultivation of jing, qi and shen, or essence, energy and mind, is involved in all these arts of lightness, energy and hardness. On the other hand, any art in the cultivation of essence, energy and mind can also be classified into arts of lightness, energy and hardness.

... Herein lies their similarity. In all the arts of lightness, energy and hardness, the cultivation is internal, involving the cultivation of essence, energy and mind. The difference in the earlier classification into training of essence, energy and mind, lies in the emphasis in training, i.e. training of essence emphasizes essence in the training, whereas training of energy or mind emphasizes energy or mind in their training. The difference in this classification into arts of lightness, energy and mind lies in their different functions.

Qinggong or art of lightness enables a practitioner to be “light”. His physical weight, as a skeptic ignorantly claimed in a different context, would be the same but he becomes figuratively “light” in that he can jump up very high and run very fast. Practitioners of the art of lightness are fast and agile.

My sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, told me that he witnessed my sigong jumping up a wall about 10 feet high. I could run many kilometers without panting and without feeling tired. Students of my Intensive Chi Kung Course could do even better. They did not have to regulate their breaths as I did when running Thousand Steps, but used chi to do their running round a training hall about 10 times without panting and without feeling tired.

Qigong or the art of energy is what we practice, especially in our qigong (chi kung) classes. We generate an energy flow and store our energy in our dan tian, or energy fields. The practice enables practitioners to overcome pain, injury and illness, have good health, vitality and longevity, and attain peak performance in daily life. They feel relaxed, peaceful and happy.

Yingong or the art of hardness is sometimes called martial art qigong because it is usually practice in martial arts, if students have the good luck to learn it. It is not hard conditioning, as some practitioners mistake it to be. It is charging up sub-atomic particles with a lot of energy so that the trained parts of a practitioner’s body become very powerful. Sometimes external tools are employed, like strike-bags and bamboos in Iron Palm and Iron Arm training, but these tools are not meant to harden the parts of the body to be trained. Practitioners of the art of hardness feel powerful and full of vitality.

Internal force training is also classified into hard and soft. It should be noted that “soft” here, which is “rou” in Chinese, is not what many people, especially in the West, conceptualize softness is. Soft force, like Cosmos Palm, can be more forceful than hard, or “gang”, force, like Iron Palm.

It should also be noted that hard force here refers to hard internal force, not external muscular strength. Because of shallow understanding due to a lack of proper guidance, some people train hard internal force wrongly as external conditioning, often resulting in insidious harm.

Iron Palm training is a good example. There should not be tensing of muscles when training Iron Palm. The palms of an Iron Palm practitioner, though bigger in size than palms of ordinary people, are still gentle and soft, and retain the natural functions of the palms. Training Iron Palm wrongly as hard conditioning would make the palms rough and tough, sometimes deformed, and often losing their natural functions.

Soft internal force training is sometimes, though wrongly, described as qigong for health. The popular but mistaken view is due to the fact that most types of soft internal force training are meant for the purposes of health, vitality and longevity. Eighteen Lohan Hands is a good example. However, soft internal force training can also be used for martial purposes, like Cosmos Palm.

The similarity between hard and soft internal force is that both forms involved internal cultivation, i.e. the cultivation of essence, energy and mind. Two important requirements are that in both hard and soft internal training, there should be no muscular tension and no wandering thoughts.

The difference lies in the nature of the force. As the name clearly denotes, hard force is “hard”, which means the force is consolidated, whereas soft force is “soft”, which means flowing. Practitioners of hard force feel powerful, and relaxed. It gives them confidence and work efficiency. Practitioners of soft force feel fresh and energetic. It gives them agility, in both thought and action.

It is unprecedented that we have an incredible range of internal force training methods. Understanding the philosophy of internal force, as the answer here reveals, enables us not only to be very cost-effective in our training but also sagacious in our choice of internal force to train.

Question 9

What are the signs that indicate that you are successfully building internal force?

David

Answer

An effective way to find out whether you are practicing an exercise or an art correctly is to access your results with the results practicing that exercise or art is meant to give.

If an exercise or art is meant to give ABC, and you obtain ABC, it indicates you have been practicing successfully. If you get XYZ, it indicates you have not been practicing correctly, or the exercise or art you practice is not genuine.

This assessment is fool-proof, yet many practitioners do not realize they do not get the results their practice is meant to give despite having practiced for a long time.

Why do we practice chi kung? It is to overcome pain and illness, and to have good health. Why do we practice any martial art? It is to be able to defend ourselves and to be healthy.

Yet, many chi kung practitioners still suffer from their pain and illness, and do not enjoy good health, but they do not realize they have not been practicing their art correctly, or their art is not genuine. Many martial artists cannot defend themselves and are actually becoming more unhealthy despite their dedicated practice, but they do not realize their art do not bring the results it is meant to give.

When reminded of their folly, instead of being thankful, they become aggressive and angry. They do not want to look foolish for a day; they prefer to remain fools for life.

Thus, the signs that indicate you have been successful in building internal force are those signs that indicate the benefits of internal force.

The various benefits of internal force can be classified into three categories:

1. To maintain life.
2. To enhance life.
3. To enable you to have better results no matter what you do.

Maintaining life is the most important function of internal force. It is also the function that is often neglected. As illness threatens life, your internal force will overcome illness more effectively than if you had no internal force. Indeed you are unlikely to be sick in the first place. All your physiological and psychological processes that keep you alive will work better than before.

If you have these signs, they indicate that you have successfully built internal force. If you are more prone to illness than before, it shows your training has not been correct.

After ensuring that life goes on harmoniously, your internal force will enhance life. All your life sustaining functions will work better than before. Hence, if you find that you have more stamina, can focus on your work more effectively, are not tired easily, you have trained internal force successfully. Reversely, if you are find yourself easily out of breath, cannot concentrate on your work, or become tired easily, you have not been successful in building internal force.

Internal force enables you to have better results no matter what you do! When you read a book you can comprehend better, when you eat your meals you enjoy them more, when go out with your family you enjoy their company. These are signs that you have successfully build internal force. If you cannot focus on what you read, have no appetite, and are indifferent to your family, you have not been successful in your internal force training.

Internal force is not just for breaking bricks or your opponent's bones. It enriches our life in countless ways.

Question 10

From past experience crossing hands with some of my seniors within our school, I have had the privilege to receive some glimpses of differing manifestations of force:

- a) a sensation of 'prickly needles' entering the body
- b) electric burning entering the body
- c) an impenetrable tube with a core of iron that cannot be properly grasped by the hand, i.e. the hand does not feel it has made contact with the other exponent's skin
- d) the exterior feels physical and muscular, but deep inside there is something solid and impenetrable
- e) something 'alive' (without mercy) that is being held tightly on a leash, ready to attack if released
- f) solid, soft, gentle, absorbing in a way that drains one's power and stamina

Which of the two categories of 'consolidated' and 'flowing' force do these descriptions fall under?

Why are there so many varying manifestations of force?

Which is better to use to manage the above manifestations, consolidated or flowing force?

Sifu Emiko

Answer

Classifying force as consolidated and flowing is for convenience. Sometimes there is overlapping, sometimes it is not clear-cut which classification a particular manifestation belongs, or the same manifestation may be classified differently in different situations. Nevertheless, the following manifestations may be classified as follows:

- a) sensation of 'prickly needles' entering the body -- flowing force.
- b) electric burning entering the body – flowing force.
- c) an impenetrable tube with a core of iron that cannot be properly grasped by the hand, i.e. the hand does not feel it has made contact with the other exponent's skin – consolidated force.
- d) the exterior feels physical and muscular, but deep inside there is something solid and impenetrable – consolidated force.
- e) something 'alive' (without mercy) that is being held tightly on a leash,

ready to attack if released – flowing force.

f) solid, soft, gentle, absorbing in a way that drains one's power and stamina – flowing force.

... Because there are many different situations and conditions, there are many varying manifestations of force. When a situation or condition changes, the manifestation may also change.

For example, a sensation of “pricking needles” entering the body is described as flowing force. When we lower our arms in Lifting the Sky, we may have this sensation. As we continue performing Lifting the Sky, the flowing force and pricking sensation increase.

But if we stop the movement and let the arms hand down leisurely, the flowing force may turn into consolidated force, while the pricking sensation may continue for some time. If we stay at this static position long enough, the consolidated force accumulates, and the pricking sensations may change into something solid.

In the second example above, electric burning entering the body during crossing hands is classified as flowing force. The force of your sparring partner flowed into you. But if he focuses his force to consolidate it, the burning electricity may become an impenetrable tube with a core of iron.

We can use consolidated force or flowing force to manage the above manifestations. The choice depends on our ability, i.e. whether we are better in applying consolidated force or flowing force, or it depends on the situation. i.e. whether consolidated force or flowing force will overcome the situation more effectively.

When a sensation of prickly needles of an opponent flows into you during crossing hands, you can force him back using consolidated force, or fell him onto the ground using flowing force.

When the flowing force of electric burning of an opponent enters your body, you can strike back using consolidated force, or you can deflect his attack using flowing force. In this case, unless you are overwhelming more powerful than your opponent, it is better to use flowing force, as striking back with consolidated force may not stop his flowing electric force enter you.

Instead of grasping or gripping him, you can strike his arm which is like an impenetrable tube with a core of iron if your force is stronger. If your opponent is stronger, you can lead his arm to futility using flowing force.

You may use consolidated force to break both the muscular exterior as well as the solid interior of your opponent if you are more powerful. Or you can use your flowing force to penetrate his exterior and interior hardness, like electricity penetrating a bell. Otherwise use flowing force to lead his attack to futility.

Against something being held on a leash, striking it with consolidated force is recommended. However, if your consolidated force is inadequate, you need to escape using flowing force.

Use consolidated force to intercept an opponent's solid yet gentle way, and break its flow. If you use flowing force, you have to first flow with the opponent, then turn the momentum back on him.

The examples show that consolidated force is recommended when you are stronger. If the opponent is stronger, flowing force can neutralize him and then counter attack.

Question 11

After 60 years of experience, what would you say are the most important "secrets" of building internal force

Many people reading this won't be Martial Artists and could dismiss the idea of "building internal force" as being not for them. Could you explain:

- What the benefits of building internal force are for someone who isn't planning or wanting to practice a martial art?
- What are the most cost-effective ways of building internal force for someone like this?

Sifu Barry

Answer

From my experience the most important secret of building internal force is chi flow. Without chi flow in the first place, no internal force can be built. It is a secret, I believe, that even masters who were successful in building internal force, did not know.

If the internal force masters did not know this secret, how did they build internal force? They did so when there was chi flow in themselves, but they did not consciously know it. Hence, they took a long time to build internal force, which was built only when chi flow happened haphazardly without their conscious knowing.

In our case in Shaolin Wahnam, we take a faster time to build a similar amount of internal force because not only do we know the underlying philosophy, we purposely generate a chi flow before building internal force. Moreover, we have many internal force building methods, from which we choose the most suitable. Most past masters had only one method. Thus, we can build in a month a similar amount of internal force what past masters would need more than a year.

It is understandable that other people outside our school would think we are boastful or arrogant. But some quantification can make this point clear. The explanation is mainly for our own family members, though others outside our school will benefit from it, but most of them will not appreciate it, and even if they secretly agree they will still deny it in public due to their prejudice, misplaced pride or other reasons. This, of course, is their business, and we do not want to waste our time arguing with them. Yet, slowly the

philosophy will be confirmed more widely by actual practice, and revolutionize internal force training in the future.

Suppose one can build 100 units of internal force in one successful training session, and he needs 10,000 units to be regarded as having internal force. Actually any number can be used to explain the underlying principles, but using 100 and 10,000 is easy for calculation.

So this practitioner needs 100 training sessions if the internal force is progressively accumulated. In other words, having accumulated 100 units in his first successful training session, his second successful training session must be close enough so that he can add the first 100 units of internal force to the second 100 units to make a total of 200 units, and so on. In this way, if he trains everyday and is successful in accumulating internal force everyday, he will need 100 days to build 10,000 units of internal force to be reasonably successful in his internal force training.

However, even when the practitioner trains everyday if any two successful sessions are far apart, some or all of the internal force built in the first session will be lost. The further apart the two successful sessions are, the more force will be lost. Suppose they are 3 days apart, and 30 units of the original 100 units are lost. So, after his second successful session, which is the 4th day after his first successful session, he will have 170 units of internal force, not 200 units because 30 units has been dissipated.

If the two successful sessions are 10 days apart, assuming that 10 units of force is lost per day, the practitioner will have only 100 units of internal force after the second successful session, which is 20 days after his first successful session, because the original 100 units which he acquired in his first session has been lost. So, for him regardless of how long he may train, he will not be able to accumulate the 10,000 units of force to be regarded as successful in his internal force training.

... We should also take note that the first successful training session may not occur on his first day of training. For most practitioners it may occur after many months. For some it may never occur.

But for our students it occurs on the very first day, and everyday. Why is it so? It is because we know the underlying philosophy and put it to work in a simple, direct and effective manner. Thus, our students training everyday will acquire 10,000 units of force in 100 days.

Let us compare how long a past master would take to acquire a similar amount of force. Do not forget that this past master when he was a student learning from his own master did not learn internal force on the first day he started learning from his teacher. Usually it would be a few years before his

teacher would teach him internal force training.

As this student, who would later become a master after he had successfully developed internal force, did not know that chi flow was necessary, and flowing force and consolidating force were the skills to build internal force, his building of internal force happened haphazardly only when without his conscious knowing conditions had become ideal that these processes occurred.

The first time these processes occurred could be many months after he had started his training. Let us be very generous and presume that they occurred only 5 days after the start of his training. So on the fifth day he had his successful session and acquired 100 units of internal force. For easy calculation, let us presume that his successful sessions occurred every five days, though in reality the number of days between his successful sessions varied.

So on the 10th day he had another successful session and acquired another 100 units of internal force. But 50 units of his original internal force acquired on his first successful session had dissipated, leaving him the remaining 50 units. So on the 10th day he had a total of 150 units. Working progressively in this way, we would have acquire 300 units after one month.

Again for easy calculation, based on the above estimation we may assume that his average accumulation of internal force is 300 units per month, or 9900 units in 33 months. It would therefore take him nearly 3 years to accumulate 10,000 unites of internal force, which our students could accumulate in 100 days or slightly more than 3 months.

Although the figures in our estimation are not exact, they are fair estimates, and provide us a clear picture why our students can achieve in a month what past masters would take a year! Indeed, to estimate that past students took only 3 years to build sufficient internal force to be called masters is very generous in our estimation. In reality they would take at least 10 to 15 years. It took me 17 years before I had my first experience of internal force at the receiving end. I spent two years training internal force in a school famous for internal force, yet I felt nothing – due to my own inability.

Many people think, wrongly, that internal force is only for martial artists. If they know what internal force can do for them, they will learn it. If they know how effective our school is in teaching students attain internal force, they will learn from our school, provided they are sensible and kind to themselves, and are not stubborn, prejudiced or deluded by false pride. As I have often said, that is their problem, not ours. We don't have any problems, but our task is to help sincere and deserving students attain internal force and enjoy its countless benefits.

... Irrespective of whether a person is planning or wanting to practice a martial art, the countless benefits of internal force can be classified into three categories:

1. To maintain life.
2. To enhance life.
3. To enable practitioners get better results no matter what he does.

When a person is sick or in pain, internal force enables him to recover faster. If he is already healthy, internal force ensures that life goes on harmoniously.

Enhancing life can be manifested in countless ways. When he returns from work, for example, he has a lot of energy to enjoy the company of his family and friends, or by himself.

No matter what he does, including eating and having sex, internal force will give him better results. If he practices a martial art, internal force will improve his performance in all aspects.

Hence, improving any martial art in all its aspects is only a small part of one of the three categories of benefits.

For us the most cost-effective way to help someone not wanting to practice a martial art to build internal force is to get him (or her) to enter into a chi kung state of mind, and let him stand upright in a relaxed manner without thought. He would develop some mental clarity and internal force. Highlight to him that it is more important and useful for him to employ the mental clarity and internal force in his daily life irrespective of whether he practices a martial art.

Another very cost-effective way of building internal force is to teach him Worshipping the Buddha from the Eighteen-Lohan Art. If he performs the exercise in a chi kung state of mind, he can develop some chi flow and internal force. If necessary, explain to him that chi flow is soft internal force.

If you want him to experience hard internal force, or internal force usually associated with martial arts, a very cost-effective method is teaching him Reverse Hanging of Silver Hooks, also from the Eighteen-Lohan Art. He will probably be amazed at the amount of internal force generated in such a short time.

It is interesting to note that the above three very cost-effective methods involved the training of jing, qi and shen, or essence, energy and mind, in a reverse order. The first method focuses on the internal cultivation of mind, the second on energy, and the third on essence.

It is important to note that these methods are very cost-effective if we are the teacher. Most other people teaching these three methods are unlikely to produce any result. Indeed the third method is likely to produce harm for the student. Incidentally, these examples illustrate that not every teacher is the same.

Learning internal force is a rare opportunity, though ridiculous in a good way, way we are teaching it quite generously to the public. But our students must be deserving. We are already ridiculously generous; we don't have to persuade them to learn from us.

Question 12

Last year at the Intensive Taijiquan course you taught that after internal force practice, such as Lifting Water or Three Circle Stance, one can choose to let chi flow freely, or first let the chi flow be quite still and then let go more, or let the chi flow be calm.

How does this affect on building force?

Sifu Nessa Kahila

Answer

Chi flow after building internal force brings four wonderful benefits that even some masters may not know!

1. It erases harmful side effects due to unwitting wrong practice.
2. It enhances force building.
3. It attains better balance of energy.
4. It puts internal force to better uses.

Some people may be surprise that many Chinese themselves are dreadful of internal force training. Even when they have an opportunity to train internal force, they may not want to. This is an interesting contrast to many people in the West who try to practice internal force on their own, and then teach others.

The main reason why many Chinese are dreadful of internal force is that they are afraid to train wrongly. They know very well that wrong training brings deviation, known by a frightening term in Chinese (Cantonese) as “chow for yap mor”.

Word by word “chow for yap mor” means “escape fire enter devil”. If a practitioner practices internal force wrongly, his own life force, represented here as fire, may be dissipated, and harm, represented as devil, will result. The modern term “deviation’ is less frightening.

While harmful effects of “chow for yap mor” or deviation are true, they are not as horrible as these people imagine. Internal force training is safer than driving a car or swimming in the sea. But on must learn internal force from a competent teacher. Learning on his own is asking for trouble.

Chi flow after internal force building is an excellent save-guard against deviation. Even when a practitioner has made some mistakes in his training, the chi flow will erase the harmful effects of these mistakes, without the practitioner doing anything extra!

Mistakes here refer to wrong practice due to carelessness or forgetfulness. If a practitioner purposely go against instructions, he is asking for trouble. For example, a very important instruction in any internal force training is to be relaxed. If a practitioner, due to carelessness or forgetfulness, tenses his muscles, but attempts to be relaxed when he recalls the instruction, he needs not worry or do any extra remedial exercise. His chi flow at the completion of his force training will automatically clear any harmful effects his mistakes may have caused.

But if he purposefully tenses his muscles although he knows he should not, perhaps wrongly thinking that this may increase his force, he is a fool. He will definitely derive serious harmful effects.

Although chi flow is our norm, it is rarely found in other schools. Hence, internal force practitioners of other schools do not have this safety precaution.

Besides erasing harmful effects, chi flow also enhances the result, often by a big margin though a practitioner may not be aware of it, and sometimes may even think that some of the internal force developed has been lost due to the chi flow. For example, if a practitioner spends 15 minutes training and builds 100 units of internal force, he may build 150 units if he spends 10 minutes on training and 5 minutes on chi flow.

The increase of internal force is due to his chi flow attracting more energy from the Cosmos to flow into his body. Moreover, energy that is flowing is more powerful than energy that is static.

Although there is an increase of internal force, say from 100 units to 150 units, the practitioner may have an illusion that the force is less. This is because the force is spread out due to the chi flow. When he practices Lifting Water, for example, before chi flow there were 100 units of force in his hands. After chi flow, there are only 60 units of force in his hands, the other 90 units are spread over other parts of his body.

This spreading of energy to other parts of his body helps him to attain energy balance, otherwise the energy is localized at the place of training, like his hands. Better energy balance contributes to his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health.

If too much internal force is localized in a practitioner's chest after training Three-Circle Stance, for example, physically the function of his lungs may be affected, emotionally he may feel oppressed, mentally he may feel dull, and spiritually he may be disoriented. If the energy is spread over his body, his lungs will function better, emotionally he feels confident, mentally he is fresh, and spiritually he is peaceful.

... Without chi flow, the internal force developed will be limited in its uses. It will make him a more efficient fighter, but it may not enrich his daily life. It may not even make him healthier or enhance his mental clarity. Having chi flow after his internal force building will give him all these wonderful benefits.

The countless wonderful benefits of internal force can be classified into three categories as follows:

1. To maintain life.
2. To enhance life.
3. To enable a practitioner have better results no matter what he does.

All these wonderful benefits are possible with chi flow. Without chi flow, even when a practitioner has internal force, he may not enjoy these wonderful benefits.

As I have mentioned earlier, even masters, past and present, may not have this invaluable knowledge.

When past masters were sick or injured, which threatened life, they had to take medication. They could not generate a chi flow to overcome their sickness or injury. The great Taijiquan master, Yang Deng Fu, for example, suffered an internal injury, which he sustained when sparring with his father, for life.

Chi flow enables our internal force to enhance our life. The great Xingyiquan master, Guo Yun Sheng, for example, had tremendous internal force, but he was easily irritable. He did not have chi flow to spread his force and open his heart.

In whatever he does, a person with internal force will produce better result than if he had no internal force. This is possible when the internal force is flowing.

If it is localized at when it is trained, like at the palms of an Iron Palm practitioner, its usefulness is limited to only breaking bricks or opponents' bones. It cannot be used to enhance intellectual activities like planning a project, or even in physical activities like running up a flight of stairs.

Chi flow can convert the localized force to flowing force which can be used anywhere and for whatever purposes. For example, it can convert the Iron Palm force of a practitioner to his intellectual force for him to plan a project, or to mobile force at his legs to enable him running up a flight of stairs without being tired or panting. Many of our students have reported better result in whatever they do after training internal force, which in our case is always followed with chi flow.

For more refinement to have even better results, we can vary the modes of chi flow, such as:

1. Letting chi flow freely.
2. First letting chi flow be quite still, then letting go more.
3. Letting chi flow be calm, or in other words be flowingly still.

These different chi flow modes have different effects on building internal force.

When we let chi flow freely, we use our internal force to clear blockage. It is an excellent mode for overcoming pain, injury and illness. In our sparring, if we are accidentally hurt, we can go into a vigorous chi flow to clear out the injury immediately.

When we keep quite still initially, we build up our internal force. Then when we let go more, we allow our internal force to flow moderately. This is effective for strengthening and nourishing ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. As a result we have more power in our physical movement, have better control over our emotions, our mind become more focus and fresh, and we become peaceful and happy.

By remaining to be flowingly still, we allow our internal force to build. This can increase your force building tremendously. For example, after practicing Lifting Water you have developed 100 units of internal force. If you remain flowingly still for some time, instead of just walking away after your training, you can increase your internal force to 300 units! You will also enhance your mental clarity and spiritual joy.

Having the skills as well as the philosophical understanding of these various modes of chi flow enable us to be very cost-effective and to adjust our practice to suit our aspirations and situations. If, for example, after standing flowingly still to increase your internal force, you find that the increase is beginning to feel overbearing, you may let go more and move moderately to spread the force.

Or after a vigorous chi flow to clear your injury, you wish to enhance your mental clarity to perform some intellectual work after training, you can slow down your movement to become flowingly still.

Internal force and chi flow are not only very beneficial, they are also a lot of fun.

Question 13

Many people I have spoken to over the years tend to dismiss ‘neigong’ or internal force. Instead, as mentioned to Sifu over dinner that day, many people expect to see superhuman abilities or some other external (and tangible) manifestation of ‘neigong’. The comment I hear most often is “Can you fly now after practising your qigong?” or words to that effect.

The people who do not doubt are those who have witnessed the steady but gradual transformation of someone they know who had practiced qigong, or those who have themselves experienced the wonders of qigong and have developed neigong on their own.

How can and should we best showcase the wondrous effects of qigong in a relatively short time to those who have not had the opportunity to witness how qigong (and neigong) has brought health and vitality to its practitioners, such as curious seekers who have only read about internal force but do not personally know any practitioner?

The most ideal situation would be for someone to see the transformation brought about by regular practice over time, but in today’s information-overloaded world, is there a way to get the message across in a quicker manner without resorting to “stuntman shows”?

Sifu Zhang Wuji

Answer

Honestly I do not want to waste my time over these people. I rather spend time taking my wife, children or grandchildren out for a drive, or spend time drinking tea with you or other students.

We are ridiculously generous in sharing our arts and wonderful benefits with people whom we may not even know before, if they are deserving, But if they are undeserving, as indicated in the question they ask, don’t waste your time entertaining them.

If I want to answer their question, “Can you fly now after practicing your qigong?” I may say one of the following, and I mean it.

1. I may explain to you if you pay for dinner at an expensive restaurant.
2. I can fly before or after practicing my qigong – more than nine times a year around the world. My students pay for my air tickets.
3. Really, I don't want to waste my time on you.

Interestingly, no one has asked me such a question. But many people, including those who do not know I teach qigong, have expressed their admiration for my good health, vitality and cheerfulness. Some have complimented me on my quickness of mind and clarity of explanation.

We do not need to showcase the wondrous effects of our qigong. We ourselves are living examples. We are healthy, full of vitality, kind and considerate, confident of our abilities, cheerful and encouraging, and pleasant in our dealing with other people. We walk our talk.

When sincere seekers ask me questions, I reply immediately if the answers are short. If the answers are long, I refer them to my website. If they ask me to teach them some chi kung exercise to try out, I tell them to attend my Intensive Chi Kung Course or learn from our instructors. Teaching them for free may spoil their chance of learning our wonderful art.

When they find out the price of my course and say it is expensive, I tell them that they will get more benefits than the price they pay for, otherwise they can ask for a full refund.

A very convincing and fast way to demonstrate the effectiveness of our arts is to perform a flying kick in the air or an agile roll on the ground. Many people expressed amazement when they see me, at 70, performing such impromptu athletic actions. I performed them not to convince skeptics, whom I have said earlier I would not want to waste my time on, but to students of our school to illustrate some points in question.