



Question and Answer Series:

The 18 Jewels of Shaolin Wahnam Chi Kung

By Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Question 1

In the announcement to the renaming of the 18 therapeutic exercises, it is mentioned that you invented the exercises yourself. I'd like to congratulate and thank you very much that you are teaching them to the public now!

Would you please elaborate on the developmental phase?

At least some of the exercises (I don't know all yet) are similar to chi flow movements. Did you formalize the chi movements to patterns?

Have there been other exercises you drew your inspiration from?

Did you create the single exercises for special purposes or did you find out their benefits after the creation, e.g. through experience of your healing patients?

Have there been more exercises that did not make it to the collection of the traditional number of 18?

Sifu Leonard

Answer

Anthony Korahais, the Chief Instructor of Shaolin Wahnam USA, was the one who suggested changing the name "Eighteen Therapeutic Exercises" to "Eighteen Jewels".

Anthony was also the one who suggested grouping these eighteen exercises into a set. Many years ago he and I were discussing what exercises we had in our teaching repertoire. After listing exercises in Eighteen Lohan Hands, Sinew Metamorphosis and Eighteen Shaolin Wahnam Techniques for Health and Vitality, he mentioned that there were exercise I used for healing, like Bear Walk and Embracing Buddha (at that time we did not teach Eighteen-Lohan Art and Bone Marrow Cleansing yet.)

This gave me the impetus to group the therapeutic exercises into a set. Why do we choose 18 and not other numbers. This is in honour of the 18 Lohans, the 18 special and direct disciples of the Buddha often mentioned in Chinese Buddhist literature. You may have noticed that Shaolin kungfu sets are usually composed from patterns in multiple of 18, like Cross-Road consisting of 36 patterns, Flower Set of 72 patterns, and Triple Stretch of 108 patterns.

The Eighteen Jewels are as follows:

1. Double Dragon
2. Fish Flip
3. Dancing Fairy
4. Swinging Hips
5. Bear Walk
6. Immortal Takes off Shoes
7. Dragonfly Plays with Water
8. White Crane Steps on Snow
9. Drumming Kidneys
10. Touching Toes
11. Old Man Rows Boat
12. Shaking Fingers
13. Rocking Feet
14. Kicking Legs
15. Hula Hop
16. General Surveys Field
17. Dancing Butterfly
18. Embracing Buddha

All the exercises were invented to meet expedient needs. Most of them were for healing purposes. Some of them were for improved chi flow.

I did not learn chi flow from any of my sifus the way it is now taught in our school. It was evolved from my early years of teaching. I confirmed both the nature and benefits of chi flow experienced by my students with what I read in chi kung classics.

Even the way I teach chi kung and kungfu in regional and intensive courses is my innovation. I believe I was one of the first, if not the first, in teaching chi kung and kungfu in a package course of a few days. It was unthinkable when I started doing it. A brief description not only of how the 18 jewels developed but also an overview of how our methodology evolved would be interesting and beneficial.

I learned kungfu the traditional way. Chi kung, more commonly known as nei kung, was incorporated in kungfu, but taught only to trusted and advanced disciples. Most kungfu students did not have the chance to learn nei kung.

The same tradition is carried on today all over the world. By traditional way is meant that students learn mainly kungfu sets from their teachers. There is hardly any free sparring. Sometimes students may perform sparring sets, which they perform as a routine and not as training for combat.

There are no set objectives and no set aims. Usually both the students and their teachers have no idea what result the training will bring. Often they do not know why they are doing what they are doing. They do not know, for example, why a certain stance is used, or how they could apply a particular pattern in combat.

Some enterprising instructors introduced free sparring, which they borrowed from Karate and Taekwondo, into kungfu hoping that this would make their students combative. But there is no method and no system. Students put on gloves and sometimes protection gear, and just punch and kick one another.

My kungfu “enlightenment” came when I learned from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, the third generation successor from the southern Shaolin Temple. My practice was not merely learning kungfu sets as is done in most kungfu schools, but force training and combat application. Later I discovered this was what past kungfu practitioners did, especially at the Shaolin Temple.

Later when I set up Shaolin Wahnam I followed this tradition of force training and combat application. I went a step further. The combat applications I learned were from Four-Gates and Shaolin Pakua Set, which were advanced and sophisticated, and too difficult for most students. So I devised more simple combat applications, which now evolved into our 16 basic Shaolin combat sequences. I also devised 12 basic Taijiquan combat sequences.

Another historic development occurred when I decided to teach chi kung to the public. Chi kung classics indicated that chi kung was excellent for curing illness. But I reckoned that the way chi kung was traditionally taught those who needed it most urgently to overcome their illness would have no chance to learn chi kung, whereas those who had the opportunity were already fit and healthy.

So I taught the Eighteen Lohan Hands to the public in a package course of 6 months. This was revolutionary. Many people wondered what I could teach in 6 months. Chi kung training meant years. Some masters were angry that I revealed secrets to the public. When I accepted non-Chinese as students, many people were outrageous.

Later as I improved my teaching methodology I shortened the same course to 3 months. When I first traveled to Australia to teach there, I shortened the course to 10 days, but teaching 10 selected exercises instead of 18, and naming the course just “Shaolin Chi Kung”. Years later when I taught in Spain, the course was shortened to 3 days, teaching 6 exercises instead of 10. Later it was furthered shortened to just 1 day of 8 hours, teaching just 3 exercises, and naming the course “Generating Energy Flow”. Meanwhile I also taught another course of 8 hours, “Massaging Internal Organs”, using

another 3 exercises of the Eighteen Lohan Hands.

Gradually I realized the difference between techniques and skills. This realization enables us to be extremely cost-effective. Now these and other courses like “Cosmic Shower”, “Internal Force” and “Cosmic Breathing” take only 4 or 5 hours each. Not only the time to learn the exercises is much less, the benefits derived are much more, though the actual techniques learnt may be less

Double Dragon, Fish Flip, Dancing Fairy, Swinging Hips and Bear Walk, which are the first 5 of the 18 jewels, were amongst the first techniques created by me. This occurred quite early in the developmental history of our methodology, before my realization of the difference between techniques and skills. When I first taught the Eighteen Lohan Hands, it took about 4 to 6 months before students had their first chi flow. As I became more knowledgeable by reading chi kung classics, I could speed up the time for chi flow, but still it was not short enough for a course of three days.

So I started thinking. I observed how students developed their chi flow. I found two important facts: the type of patterns they performed had an effect on the type of chi flow movement that followed, and the more vigorously they performed their patterns as they progressed, the more vigorous the subsequent chi flow movement would be.

I devised a few sets of three exercises per set. These sets of exercises generated chi flow quickly that led to self-manifested chi movement.

One set consisted of Pushing Mountain Lift Sky, Double Dragon and Fish Flip. Pushing Mountain Lift Sky is a combination of Pushing Mountain and Lifting the Sky into one exercise. This set of three exercises creates a forward-backward chi flow movement.

Another set of three exercises consisted of Dancing Fairy, Swinging Hips and Bear Walk. This set generated a circular chi flow movement. I used this set in Toronto when Dr. Kay invited me to help patients with endometriosis. All the patients recovered.

Immortal Takes off Shoes and Dragonfly Plays with Water are two of the 5 exercises in the Art of Flexibility, which I originally taught in the Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Course, and which I myself used to loosen my legs so that I could sit in a half-lotus position in sitting meditation.

When I first devised White Crane Steps on Snow, it was meant to loosen knee muscles. But now it has become more sophisticated, contributing to agility and the art of lightness.

I first learned Drumming Kidneys from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam to loosen my back muscles so that I could bend forward to touch my toes without bending my knees. It has other benefits. Touching Toes was one of the 5 exercises for the Art of Flexibility.

Old Man Rows Boat, Shaking Fingers and Rocking Feet were invented to meet expedient needs while healing. They proved to be very effective.

Kicking Legs and Hula Hop were two of the exercises I created for self-manifested chi movement for people with problems at their lower body.

I learned General Surveys Field during a discussion with my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, as he told me how to help people overcome structural problem. Later I found it very useful too for overcoming depression.

Dancing Butterfly and Embracing Buddha are excellent patterns devised by me to help many people overcome various health problems, especially problems related to the heart, the lungs, the chest, the back, the spine and related emotional disorders.

Generally I formulated the exercises from pattern to movement rather than from movement to pattern. By certain physical movement of the pattern I can expect the chi to flow in certain manner, rather than desiring certain chi flow movement I set to work out the pattern. For example, because of the physical movement of Kicking Legs I expect the chi to flow to the legs. Because of the physical movement of General Surveys Field, I expect the chi to open the practitioner's shoulders and chest.

The creation of these exercises drew inspiration of the Eighteen Lohan Hands. From practicing the Eighteen Lohan Hands I could experience chi flow in certain ways and bring particular benefits. This experience and knowledge provided the foundation to devise the 18 jewels.

The exercises were first created for specific purposes. Later the exercises led to other benefits. For example, Shaking Fingers was created to overcome problems at the fingers and wrist. But later it was discovered that the exercise could also overcome problems at the shoulders. Embracing Buddha was created to overcome problems of back pain. But later it was discovered that it could also overcome allergy problems.

Yes, there are other exercises not included in the Eighteen Jewels or other sets of chi kung exercises. Some examples are Swinging Arms, Casting Net and Rocking Hips. Like the 18 jewels, they were dynamic patterns created to meet expedient needs.

As they were originally created to solve health problems these 18 exercises were collected known Eighteen Therapeutic Exercises. But they have been proven to have other benefits besides overcoming pain and illness. Hence, suggested by Anthony Korahais, we now call them the Eighteen Jewels.

Question 2

Is White Crane Steps on Snow in any way related to the Art of Lightness?

Tim

Answer

The answer is yes and no.

The term “White Crane Step on Snow” originally referred to a Shaolin kungfu pattern found in an exclusive kungfu set called “Essence of Shaolin” which I learned from Uncle Righteousness.

Sometimes I showed this pattern in class when demonstrating combat application. Amongst many functions, it is useful for intercepting a sweeping kick and breaking an opponent’s leg.

When I taught Praying Mantis in Bern a few years ago, I found the Praying Mantis Seven-Star Stance very effective in combat. I wondered why it was not popularly use in other kungfu styles. After thinking over the question, I came to a conclusion that there was a nemesis to the Seven-Star Stance, and this nemesis was “White Crane Step on Snow”.

In other words, if an opponent applies a Seven-Star Stance to break your shin, he would have his own leg broken if you respond with “White Crane Steps on Snow”, and it is difficult, but not impossible, to defend against this White Crane counter. Masters did not want to risk themselves, so the Seven-Star was not popular.

To meet an expedient need of helping students overcome knee problems, I devised an exercise that resembled this kungfu pattern “White Crane Steps on Snow”. So I call the chi kung exercise “White Crane Steps on Snow” too.

Hence, in these two aspects of kungfu application and chi kung healing, “White Crane Steps on Snow” is not related to the Art of Lightness.

I practiced the Art of Lightness for some time in my young days. I could jump up to a height of about 4 feet on the spot. Unfortunately I did not continue the training after sustaining an injury, “White Crane Steps on Snow” was not one of the required exercises.

However, when I taught the Eighteen Jewels recently (February 2013), “White Crane Steps on Snow” was one of the exercises. When I taught it, I meant it to be an exercise for the knees. But when students practiced this exercise in chi flow, I found that they became very agile. I was innovative and I encouraged them to run and jump using “White Crane Steps on Snow” while in chi flow.

Jereom, for example, was very impressive. He could spring up a few feet quite effortlessly. I encouraged him to continue practicing with this exercise. Hopefully he may break the world high jump record one day! In this respect, “White Crane Steps on Snow” is related to the Art of Lightness. If I shall teach the Art of Lightness one day in future, I shall include the Art of Lightness in its training.

Question 3

If I understand correctly the Eighteen Jewels are relatively speaking of low-level qigong in our school. Looking at the different results/benefits participants have been sharing, they are incredible, far-reaching and profound. Why can so called low-level qigong exercises be so powerful and when and why do they sometimes suit better for healing?

Binia

Answer

Low-level and high-level are relative terms.

We can look at the relative qualification from three perspectives.

In the first perspective when we compare different qigong arts practiced in our school, the Eighteen Jewels are low-level in relation to arts like the Eighteen-Lohan Art and Sinew Metamorphosis which are of a higher level.

A progressive range of the arts practiced in our school from low-level to high-level is as follows:

1. Eighteen Jewels (formerly called Eighteen Therapeutic Exercises)
2. Eighteen Exercises for Health and Vitality
3. Eighteen Lohan Hands
4. Eighteen-Lohan Art
5. Zhan Zhuang or Stance Training
6. Abdominal Breathing
7. Dan Tian Breathing
8. Sinew Metamorphosis

Please note that the above arts relate to techniques. Eighteen Jewels, for example, refer to 18 techniques, which have form and are visible.

Arts like Generating Energy Flow and Cosmic Shower relate to skills. Generating Energy Flow, for example, refers to the skill of generating a chi flow, which has no form and is invisible, i.e. the chi flow has no definite form and we do not see the chi flow though we can see the bodily movement manifesting the chi flow.

The difference between techniques and skills, which are directly relevant to whether an art is low-level or high-level will be explained later.

In the second perspective when we compare Eighteen Jewels practiced in our school with qigong arts practiced in other schools, our Eighteen Jewels is high-level, producing incredible, far-reaching and profound results. This is probably the reason that prompted your question.

Understandably, other people may be angry at my statement that our Eighteen Jewels, which we consider low-level compared to other arts in our school, is high-level compared to arts practiced by other schools. Honestly we never mean to be insulting, but this is a fact, and pointing out this fact is relevant and important in this question.

Let us take two arts, A and B. By practice art A, practitioners can overcome illness like cancer and heart problems, but by practicing art B practitioners cannot over illness. Obviously art A is of a higher level than art B.

By practicing art A, even if they are smaller in size, old or are female, practitioners have more vitality than others who are bigger in size, younger or are male, but by practicing art B practitioners do not have these benefits. Art A is of an even higher level than art B.

By practicing art A practitioners who were previous stressful become relaxed, who were previously depressed become happy, who were previously angry become peaceful, but practicing art B practitioners do not have these benefits. Art A is further more higher level than art B.

Eighteen Jewels have all the benefits credited to art A, but most other arts practiced in other schools do not have these benefits. They are like art D.

The third perspective is skills. Not many practitioners differentiate between techniques and skills. By differentiating between techniques and skills, and apply this understanding to our training, we become incredibly cost-effective. Applying appropriate skills enables us to make a relative low-level art in our school like Eighteen Jewels to become high-level in its results.

A progressive range from low-level to high-level of arts based on skills practiced in our school is as follows:

1. Generating Energy Flow
2. Self-Manifested Qi Movement
3. Directing Chi Flow (to various parts of body)
4. Massaging Internal Organs
5. Developing Internal Force
6. Cosmic Shower
7. Cosmic Breathing
8. Small Universe
9. Big Universe (Merging with Cosmos)

Normally the level of technique corresponds to the level of skills. For example, a low-level technique like one from the Eighteen Jewels will result in a low-level skill like generating energy flow. A medium-level technique like one from zhan zhuang will result in a medium-level skill like developing internal force. A high-level technique like dan tian breathing will result in a high-level skill like Small Universe.

This has been the case of all practitioners since the past. This was the case when I learned qigong from my sifus and when I taught qigong in my early years. Indeed practitioners in general, including masters, do not differentiate between techniques and skills. They just practice the techniques and are usually unaware of the skills. For example, they practice Eighteen Lohan Hands and subsequently experience an energy flow, but they may not be aware of it like we do, and they do not give a name for it. They just practice dan tian breathing, and may pulsate with the Cosmos, but they may not be aware of it like we do, and they do not give a name for this skill.

Now we have progressed to a ridiculous level where we can use a low-level technique to attain a high-level skill, or reversely use a high-level technique to operate a low-level skill. For example, we may use a low-level technique like Touching Toes from the Eighteen Jewels, and attain the Small Universe. We may use a high-level technique like Flicking Fingers from Sinew Metamorphosis to operate a low-level skill like self-manifested qi movement. It is ridiculous but true. I believe this is unprecedented in qigong history. Qigong geniuses in the past would have done this, but it was never taught as a coherent system in a school.

It is because of our ability to use low-level techniques from the Eighteen Jewels to attain high-level skills that these exercises become so powerful and that we produce incredible, far-reaching and profound results like developing a lot of internal force and mental clarity, and expanding into the Cosmos.

The Eighteen Jewels are also very suitable for healing because we can also operate the techniques at relatively low-level skills like generating energy flow, self-manifested qi movement and massaging internal organs. In fact these were the skill level the techniques were meant for when I first invented them. It was later that I operated them at higher skill levels, and taught students how to do so.

These techniques are more suitable than other techniques because it was precisely when I found the other techniques insufficient in meeting certain needs of patients that I invented them. For example when I used techniques from the Eighteen Lohan Hands, which I normally did, it took my patients a longer time to enter self-manifested qi movement, and the movement was not vigorous. So I invented “Double Dragon” and “Fish Flip” for this purpose. The

self-manifested qi movement came faster, and it was more vigorous.

When I wanted to help patients push out blockage down their legs, I could use “Three Level to Ground” or “Deep Knee Bend” from the Eighteen Lohan Hands. But I found that these techniques focused more on the knees rather than on pushing blockage down the legs. So invented “Bear Walk” which produced the effect more efficiently. I am very happy that I invented “Bear Walk”. I have used “Bear Walk” frequently to help patients on wheel-chairs and walker to walk and run again unaided.

These technique are actually more valuable than real jewels even when operated at a relatively low level of skills!

Question 4

If students practice techniques from the 18 Jewels, and afterwards don't have a chi flow but just stand still, is there any harm? And does this apply to other types of Chi Kung and also to performing Kung Fu sets?

Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

Firstly we need to be clear of the term “chi flow”.

For convenience we may define the term “chi flow” under two main categories, its wide interpretation and its narrow interpretation.

In its wide interpretation, the term is self-explanatory. Chi flow refers to chi flowing in a person's body.

Actually, chi is flowing in every living person, irrespective of whether he practices chi kung. If the chi flow is interrupted, he becomes sick or in pain. If the chi stops flowing, he is dead.

But this is not the meaning we refer to even when we use the wide interpretation. We refer to an increase in the flow as a result of his chi kung training.

The increase of flow may be just a little or a lot, and it may take a long time or a short time. If the increase is just a little and takes a long time, as in low-level chi kung, it is not obvious, but we still regard it as chi flow in its wide interpretation.

If the increase is a lot and occurs in a short time, as in high-level chi kung, it is usually obvious and is manifested as chi flow movements. Sometimes the movements are gentle, like swaying about while standing on a spot. Sometimes the movements are vigorous, like jumping about and rolling on the floor.

Irrespective of whether the chi flow movements are gentle or vigorous, so long as we can see the chi flow movements, we refer to this as chi flow in its narrow interpretation. In fact, this is how we generally use the term “chi flow”.

It is also possible that chi is flowing powerfully inside a practitioner's body but it is not manifested outwardly as chi flow movements. In this case we refer to it as chi flow in its wide interpretation.

To sum up, if the chi flow is not manifested outwardly as chi flow movements, we refer to it as chi flow in its wide interpretation. If it is manifested outwardly as chi flow movements, we refer to it as chi flow in its narrow interpretation. Until we have new terms to denote these two different types of chi flow, we have to be the term chi flow in its wide interpretation or narrow interpretation.

We take some time to explain how we use the term "chi flow" because the term is widely used by us but seldom used by other practitioners, now as well as in the past! If you check classical Chinese chi kung literature, you will not find the term "chi flow" described as a genre in Chinese, which is literally "qi liu". If you check modern chi kung literature in English, apart from ours, you will also not find the term "chi flow" described as a genre.

Why is this so? It is because chi flow is a phenomenon very common to us. It has become a hallmark of our chi kung as well as kungfu training. But chi flow manifested with chi flow movements, i.e. chi flow in its narrow interpretation, seldom happens now and seldom happened in the past to other practitioners!

There is a type of chi kung with outward manifested chi flow movements, now as well as in the past. But its practitioners do not call it chi flow, they call it self-manifested chi movement, or zi fa dong gong in Chinese. This is a modern term. In the past, it was called by the name of the art it was practiced, namely Five-Animal Play, or wu xing si in Chinese.

When I first wrote "The Art of Chi Kung", I described this phenomenon, which was very effective in helping students overcome pain and illness, as self-induced chi flow. Students often moved about vigorously, sometimes making interesting sounds.

The movements as a result of self-induced chi flow appeared to be spontaneous. For example, some students might jump about, hit themselves hard but without any harm, or roll on the floor. The students did not voluntarily make these extra-ordinary movements. The movements spontaneously came about due to vigorous chi flow inside their body. But the practitioners had control over these movements. They could slow down or stop the extra-ordinary movements if they wanted.

Self-induced chi flow occurred as a result of performing techniques from the Eighteen Lohan Hands. Later I devised some exercises, which formed part of the Eighteen Jewels, to speed up these extra-ordinary movements and make them more vigorous.

A senior student commented that other chi flow movements, which were gentler and less extra-ordinary, like swaying gently after practicing Abdominal Breathing, were also self-induced. Hence he suggested that self-induced chi flow did not refer just to these spontaneous, extra-ordinary movements.

This prompted me to change the term to self-manifested chi movement, which was a translation of the already existing “zi fa dong gong”. Since then I have used the term “chi flow”, without the qualifier “self-induced”, in a wider sense to include any flow of energy, with or without outward manifested movements.

The closest term in Chinese classical chi kung literature for chi flow is “xing qi”, which means “circulating energy”, in contrast to “yang qi”, which is “nourishing energy”. Please note that the “yang” in “yang qi” is different from the “yang” in “yin-yang”. However, “xing qi” or circulating energy is not exactly the same as “chi flow” as we often use the term, especially with outward manifested chi flow movements.

With this background knowledge, we can now answer with some insight the questions asked.

If students practice techniques from the 18 Jewels, and afterwards do not have a chi flow but just stand still, irrespective of whether “chi flow” is taken in its wide interpretation without outward manifested movement, or in its narrow interpretation with outward manifested movement, there is no harm.

When chi flow is taken in its wide interpretation, which means there is no energy flow inside a practitioner’s body, the techniques are performed not as chi kung but as gentle physical exercise. This indeed is the situation of more than 80% of chi kung practitioners the world over, regardless of what chi kung techniques they practice.

The techniques are correctly and sometimes beautifully performed according to their form, but the practitioners lack the skills to generate a chi flow. Recently I discovered that it is the chi flow, not the techniques, that give the benefits of practicing chi kung. In other words, if they do not have chi flow, even when the techniques are correctly performed according to their form, the practitioners will not overcome pain and illness, and not attain good health, vitality and longevity regardless of

how long they may have practiced their exercises.

Hence, if there is no chi flowing inside the practitioners' body, there is no harm, but there is also no benefit. This is true provided, of course, the practitioners perform their techniques correctly. If they practice the techniques wrongly, like straining their muscles or over-working their organs, there will be harm.

The harm is not due to their not having chi flow, but due to their wrong training. But if they have a chi flow, especially a vigorous one with manifested movements, the harmful effects due to their wrong training will be overcome by the chi flow.

There must be chi flow in its wide interpretation before chi flow in its narrow interpretation can follow. In other words, if there is no chi flowing inside a practitioner's body, logically there will be no outward manifestation of chi flow movements due to the internal chi flow.

If there is chi flowing inside a practitioner's body, and if he is relaxed and not thinking of any thoughts, outward chi flow movements will be manifested. In classical terms, this is expressed as "extreme quiescence generates movement". Usually, but not always, the more vigorous the internal chi flow is, the more vigorous will be the manifestation of external movements, unless the practitioner controls or modifies the movements.

Is it harmful if after practicing techniques from the Eighteen Jewels or any chi kung exercises, students do not go into chi flow manifested with external movements but just stand still? No, is no harm.

Indeed, this is the normal way people practice chi kung. As a result of performing any chi kung techniques correctly, chi flows inside their body. The chi flow inside their body normally does not manifest as vigorous outward movements. Sometimes it may manifest as gentle movements, like swaying gently, but not as vigorous movements like swinging their arms wildly, hopping about or performing graceful dancelike actions, often with making interesting sounds.

On the other hand, if there is no chi flow inside their body, they merely perform the chi kung techniques as gentle physical exercise and not as chi kung or energy exercise. As mentioned earlier, this is the situation of more than 80% of chi kung practitioners all over the world. Irrespective of how long they may have practiced, they will not derive any chi kung benefits, simply because they have not practiced chi kung.

These practitioners usually do not differentiate between genuine chi kung and gentle physical exercise. This is because chi flow inside practitioners' body is not visible, and unless it is powerful it is also not noticeable by the practitioners themselves. This is unlike chi flow manifested in outward movements, which is easily visible.

Moreover, the term "chi flow" is not explained in chi kung classics. As mentioned before, the phenomenon of chi flow is particular to us in Shaolin Wahnam, it is uncommon to most other practitioners.

Hence, these practitioners do not realize that they are actually not practicing chi kung, which is an art of energy management, though they practice chi kung forms as external gentle exercise. In the same way, most Taijiquan practitioners today do not practice Taijiquan, which is an internal martial art, though they practice Taijiquan forms as external dancelike movements.

To recapitulate, the same chi kung techniques, like those from the 18 Jewels, can be performed at three levels.

At the external level, they are performed as gentle physical exercise where there is no chi flow at all.

At the chi kung level, they are performed as energy exercise where there is chi flow inside practitioners' body but not manifested outwardly. For convenience we regard this as chi flow in its wide interpretation.

At a higher chi kung level, they are performed as energy exercise where there is chi flow inside practitioners body which are manifested outwardly. We regard this as chi flow in its narrow interpretation

Understanding these three levels of performing chi kung techniques, we can now better understand that if students practice techniques from the 18 Jewels or any chi kung exercise, and afterwards do not have a chi flow but just stand still, there is no harm, unless they practice the exercise wrongly. Here they practice the techniques at the first level, i.e. the external level.

If students practice the techniques and afterward do not have vigorous chi flow movements, but just stand still though chi is flowing inside their body, there is no harm, unless they practice the exercise wrongly. Here they practice the techniques at the second level, i.e. the chi kung level. They will have some benefit, but the benefit will be more if they let go and have vigorous chi flow movements. This will enable their chi flow inside their body to be more vigorous, enabling them to progress to the third level, i.e. a higher chi kung level.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that as practitioners progress further, their manifested chi flow movements may become less. Eventually, they may not have much or any manifested chi flow movement, yet the chi flow inside their body can be very powerful.

Hence, practitioners complete a full circle. First, there are no manifested chi flow movements. Next the manifested chi flow movements become more and more. Then the manifested chi flow movements become less. Eventually they become quite still.

At first there are no manifested chi flow movements because the chi flow inside their body is weak, and they have a lot of blockage. Next, when the chi flow becomes stronger and the blockage less, the manifested chi flow movements become more and more. Then when there is less blockage for the chi flow to push through, the manifested chi flow movements become less, though the chi flow itself has become powerful. Eventually practitioners become quite still as there is little or no blockage, and being still facilitates the process from cleansing to building and nourishing.

The same principles apply to other types of chi kung as well as to performing kungfu sets. But because the nature of practice and the force derived from the chi flow are different, there may be differences in their approaches and emphasis.

The 18 Jewels are relatively low level in our repertoire of chi kung techniques, though we may operate these low-level techniques with high-level skills to produce high-level results. On the other hand, Sinew Metamorphosis is a set of high-level techniques, though we may operate these high-level techniques using low-level skills to produce low-level results.

Please remember that low-level does not mean it is less useful. In fact most people today practice chi kung with the purpose of overcoming illness, which is considered a low-level result. Expanding into the Cosmos is a high-level result. But not many people feel the need to or are interested to expand into the Cosmos. Thus, low-level techniques meant to attain low-level results of overcoming illness are generally more useful today than high-level techniques main to attain high-level results of expanding into the Cosmos.

Techniques from the 18 Jewels are primarily meant to overcome pain and illness. Hence, they are low-level techniques. The skills best suited for this purpose are generating energy flow and self-manifested chi movement. These skills are considered low-level skills.

Techniques from Sinew Metamorphosis are primarily meant to develop a lot of internal force and to attain mental clarity, which are high-level skills. A lot of internal force is needed to break through the illusory body to expand the spirit into the Cosmos, which is a high-level result.

We choose the best techniques and the best skills to attain our desired results. If students wish to overcome pain and illness, for example, choosing techniques from the 18 Jewels and self-manifested chi movement as the primary skill is excellent.

This agrees very well with what has been described. If the students have no chi flow inside their body, they only perform the techniques as gentle physical exercise, and they will not attain the desired result of overcoming pain and illness. But this is not harmful.

If they have chi flow inside their body but not manifested as chi flow movements, they practice the same techniques as chi kung, and they are able to attain the desired result of overcoming pain and illness. If they do not progress to manifesting their internal chi flow as external chi flow movements, it is not harmful, but their results will be less and slower.

If they generate a vigorous chi flow inside their body, which is manifested as vigorous chi flow movements, they practice the same techniques as high-level chi kung, and are able to attain better results in shorter time. If they do not manifest their vigorous internal chi flow into external chi flow movements, it may or may not be harmful depending on the relationship of their physical body condition and the amount of energy they have generated.

If their physical body is too weak to hold the tremendous amount of energy, it will be harmful. It is a case of over-training. If their physical body can manage the tremendous amount of energy, it is not harmful.

This description may not apply to using techniques from Sinew Metamorphosis to operate the skill of expanding into the Cosmos, though the basic principles are the same.

If students do not have chi flow inside their body, they merely perform the Sinew Metamorphosis techniques as gentle physical exercise. Not only they will not attain the result of expanding into the Cosmos, they may harm themselves. The harm is due to the exercise causing energy blockage.

If they perform the same techniques correctly and have generated a lot of chi flow inside their body, but they just stand still and do not have manifested chi flow movements, they will get the best results if they are

ready for this high-level exercise. By standing still, they allow their chi to build and be nourished. If they have the appropriate skills, they can expand into the Cosmos.

If they are not ready, like they still have much blockage, not manifesting into chi flow movement may be harmful. Students normally do not have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand such intricacies. Hence it is important that they must practice high-level chi kung under a master's supervision.

If having generated a lot of chi inside their body, the students go into vigorous manifested chi flow movements, it may be beneficial or it may be harmful. If they can dispose off their toxic waste in time, it is beneficial. They will have good health, vitality and longevity. But they will not have high-level result like expanding into the Cosmos.

If they do not dispose off their toxic waste in time, it will be harmful. It is a case of over-cleansing. They may be in pain and feel uncomfortable.

Some of you may mistakenly think that the progression here in Sinew Metamorphosis contradicts that in 18 Jewels. In the three-level progression of 18 Jewels -- namely no chi flow, chi flow inside the body, and chi flow manifested as chi flow movements -- the best results are obtained at the third level.

It seems that the best results in Sinew Metamorphosis are obtained at the second level where practitioners stand still, and not in vigorous manifested chi flow movement. Actually, it is not the second level, it is the fifth level, where the chi flow movement has completed its cycle.

If students are at the second level, they should not use such powerful exercises like Sinew Metamorphosis. They should use less powerful exercises like techniques from 18 Jewels or 18 Lohan Hands.

Like chi kung exercises, kungfu sets vary in the amount of chi flow and internal force generated from the sets. The principles and progression of the kungfu sets are similar to those in the chi kung exercises, except that kungfu sets are generally more powerful than chi kung exercises.

A kungfu set like Four Gates <http://www.shaolin.org/video-clips-3...ate/video.html> is relatively low-level, compared to a set like Triple Stretch <http://www.shaolin.org/video-clips-5...et-videos.html> which is relatively high-level. Please note the term "relatively". In the hands of a master, Four Gates can be very profound. Four Gates is like the kungfu counter-part of 18 Jewels, and Triple Stretch the kungfu counter part of Sinew Metamorphosis.

Hence, if practitioners practice only the outward form of Four Gate, they perform the kungfu set at an external, physical level. There is no harm, but they do not get much benefit. This is what more than 80% of kungfu practitioners do, not just with Four Gates but with any kungfu sets, including those considered by their schools as very advanced sets.

If practitioners can generate an internal chi flow by practicing Four Gates, but the chi flow does not manifest as chi flow movements, they practice the kungfu set as an internal art. In the past all kungfu sets were practiced as internal arts by masters. Hence, even when these masters did not practice any supplementary internal force training methods but just by practicing their chosen kungfu sets, they had a lot of internal force. If they selected a high-level set like Flower Set or Flowing Water Floating Clouds, the internal force would be greater and attained in shorter time.

Is it harmful if practitioners, due to their ignorance or by intention, do not have an internal chi flow when their practice of a relatively low-level kungfu set like Four Gates has generated one? Yes, it is harmful. Their stopping of the chi flow causes them physical tension, mental stress and energy blockage.

If practitioners can use their internal chi flow to direct their kungfu movements, they would have attained a very high level in the performance of the set. It is difficult, but not impossible, to do so with a low-level set like Four Gates. High-level sets like Wudang Taijiquan and Dragon Strength are very suitable for this purpose. The practitioners will be very powerful and very fast, yet they will not be panting for breath and not be tired even when performing for a long time.

Is it harmful if practitioners who can manifest their internal chi flow movements into kungfu forms or external chi flow movements, do not do so but just stand still? No, it is not harmful if they allow their internal chi flow to continue but without outward manifestations. Yes, it is harmful if they also stop their internal chi flow by will or by tension.

Let us examine the progressive stages of practitioners performing a high-level kungfu set like Triple Stretch.

If they perform a high-level kungfu set at a physical level without any internal chi flow, it is harmful. It is unlike performing a low-level set physically. Why is it so?

It is because a high-level kungfu set is meant to be performed correctly as an internal art producing tremendous internal force and mental clarity. There are many techniques in the set for this purpose. If the set is not performed correctly, it will be performed wrongly. Performing a high-level internal kungfu set is harmful.

It is unlike performing a low-level kungfu set. If one does not perform a low-level set correctly, he may not necessarily perform it wrongly. Even if he does it wrongly, the adverse effects are not serious. His daily activities will be sufficient to generate enough chi flow without his knowing that can erase the adverse effects.

Take an analogy of riding a bicycle and driving a car. A bicycle is a low-level vehicle for transportation, and a car is high-level. If you do not ride a bicycle correctly, like sitting on the seat and holding the handle bar properly, you can still move with the bicycle and it is relatively not risky. But if you do not drive correctly, like stepping on the accelerator instead of the brake, you will be driving wrongly, and it is relatively risky.

The many techniques in a high-level kungfu set are devised to generate chi flow and then consolidate the chi flow into internal force. If practitioners do not have these skills, they are likely to practice the techniques as isometric exercise, which is harmful.

Just as in the case of high-level chi kung, if practitioners have generated a tremendous amount of energy which can manifest as chi flow movements, but they stand still instead, it can be harmful if they are not ready for this developmental stage yet, or it can be beneficial if they are ready.

If they are not ready, it will be a case of over-training. They will feel tired, drained and irritated. If they are ready and have the required skills, they can employ the tremendous internal force to expand into the Cosmos. They will feel a tremendous sense of freedom and joy.

Chi flow, both in its wide interpretation and its narrow interpretation, is a hallmark of our school. It gives us three wonderful benefits:

1. It spontaneously and almost immediately erases harmful effects which we may unwittingly sustained in our training.
2. It overcomes pain and illness, and gives us good health, vitality and longevity.
3. It speed up our progress at a ridiculous rate.

Many people are afraid to practice internal arts because of their fear of deviation. This was a serious hindrance facing many kungfu practitioners in the past. We are so lucky that our chi flow can overcome this huge problem that some of us may not even realize this issue.

The wonderful thing is that we do not even need to know how, where, when and why it works. So long as we practice our exercises, which inevitably include chi flow, whatever adverse effects we may unknowingly sustain will be erased. This is an important reason why we can afford our three golden rules of not to worry, not to intellectualize and to enjoy our practice.

Again without us doing anything extra and intellectualizing how it works, our chi flow will overcome pain and illness, and give us good health, vitality and longevity. Even internal art masters in the past did not have these benefits. Thus some masters were sick and had to undergo orthodox medical treatment like taking medical herbs, some sustained injuries for life, some were angry or depressed, and some did not have longevity.

Chi flow makes us ridiculously cost-effective. We can achieve results in a few days what masters themselves took months or even years. Since ancient times, the concern of kungfu and internal art cultivators was dogged perseverance, characterized by the term “ku lian” which literally means “bitter training”. Our concern is to tell our students not to over-train, and have fun. It is almost a joke.

Question 5

Did Sifu just consider to may be teach the art of lightness one day?

Every time you think it can't get any better, Sifu teaches you otherwise.

Sifu Leonard

Answer

I did not have any plans to teach the Art of Lightness, but if opportunities arise I may do so, but it is unlikely.

There are a few good reasons why I have not planned to teach the Art of Lightness.

Although I practiced the Art of Lightness before, I did not complete the training successfully. I cannot speak from direct experience, which is a hallmark of my teaching. If I teach the Art of Lightness, I could only speak from theory, though I know the theory is right.

This is different from teaching courses like Baguazhang and Xingyiquan. Although I did not learn Baguazhang and Xingyiquan from a living teacher, I could personally perform what I teach in a Baguazhang or Xingyiquan course, which is recorded in their classics as their hallmarks.

For example, it is a hallmark of Baguazhang for its practitioners to get behind their opponents in combat. I could do that, and more importantly I could teach students to do that.

It is true I could already do that even without Baguazhang. I could use Wing Choon, Flower Set or Taijiquan techniques to get behind opponents. But that was not what I did in the Baguazhang course at the UK Summer Camp 2012. I did not teach students to use Wing Chun, Flower Set or Taijiquan techniques to get behind their opponents, I taught them to use characteristic Baguazhang techniques. And I found that using Baguazhang techniques for this purpose was even more effective!

Applying powerful pressing attack on opponents with little chance for them to escape is a hallmark of Xingyiquan. I can do this, and more significantly I shall teach students to do this in the Xingyiquan course at UK Summer Camp 2013.

Again, it is true that I could already apply powerful pressing attack on opponents using Shaolin or Taijiquan techniques.

But this is not what I did in my preparation to teach Xingyiquan, and also not what I shall teach in the coming Xingyiquan course. I used characteristic Xingyiquan techniques in powerful pressing attack, and this is what I shall teach. I also found that using Xingyiquan techniques was even more effective in powerful pressing attack than using Shaolin or Taijiquan techniques!

I can't do this in an Art of Lightness course. I may tell students that jumping up or over a wall is a hallmark of the Art of Lightness, and the techniques I am teaching them are the ones recorded in classics or told to me by my sifu that would enable them to attain the desired result. But I can't demonstrate to them by jumping up or over a wall, and tell them that the methods of training for this feat are what I am teaching them. More significantly, students are not able to jump up or over a wall during the course to show that they have achieved the desired result.

This was the main reason why I did not teach a Shaolin Kungfu course or a Small Universe course initially although a lot of students asked me to. Internal force and combat efficiency are the hallmarks of Shaolin Kungfu, while attaining a continuous energy flow round the Ren and the Du meridians is the hallmark of Small Universe.

Initially I was not sure I could help students attain these results in a few days of a Shaolin Kungfu or a Small Universe Course. I did not want to tell students that if they went home and practiced for a few months what they had learned, hopefully they could develop internal force and use Shaolin Kungfu for combat, or they could have a continuous flow of energy round their Ren and Du meridians. I wanted the students to experience the desired results at the course itself. It was later when I had improved my teaching methodology and was confident that students could have the intended result at the course that I taught it.

This was, and is, the case of my chi kung courses, both intensive and regional. In a Generating Energy Flow course, for example, I told students that they could generate an energy flow, and they did at the course itself. In a Cosmic Shower course, I told students that they could enjoy a cosmic shower of energy, and they attained the intended result at the course itself.

Actually the start of my training for the Art of Lightness was incidental. About 35 years ago I was testing my ability to break bricks with my Cosmos Palm. I bought a lot of bricks, and broke a few everyday. I lined the broken bricks at the sides of my garden. One day I was about to throw these unwanted, broken bricks away.

Then I thought to myself, “Instead of throwing the broken bricks away, I could use them for some purpose.” Earlier, when I was learning from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, he told me the secret methods to train the Art of Lightness. There were three levels, namely the physical, the energy and the mind. I would not mention the energy and the mind levels here, as students attempting the methods on their own are likely to harm themselves. The main procedure of the physical level was to dig a hole, jump down the hole, scrape away some earth every day, and then jump up from the hole.

I did not attempt the training because it was not feasible to dig a hole in my garden big enough for this purpose. I thought that instead of jumping up from a hole, I could jump up two piles of bricks which I could gradually increase their height.

I was doing quite well in my daily training. I particularly remember one morning when I jumped up the piles of brick, which were about 5 feet high then, my neighbor who was on the other side of a wall separating our houses and therefore could not see me earlier, were very surprised to see me suddenly appearing in the air!

But this was soon followed by a fall. One day after I had jumped up the two piles of broken bricks, the piles shook and down I fell. I cut my thigh quite deeply in my fall. It took me about two weeks to recover.

After my recovery from the deep wound I did not continue my training for the Art of Lightness, The main reason was that I thought apart from novelty there were not many practical uses for the Art of Lightness.

Years later my wife told me that it would be romantic to find someone jumping up a tree, for example, using the Art of Lightness. Had she mentioned this earlier, I would certainly have continued my training just to make her happy. But now I believe I could make her happier by driving her to a nice restaurant to enjoy dinner together.

Actually the Art of Lightness is not totally without practical uses nowadays. One night after returning from kungfu teaching in Penang, my niece, who was about 5 years old then, was sitting on the upper end of a flight of stairs leading from the ground floor to the first floor. She was excited seeing me home, and in her excitement she tumbled down the stairs. I ran from the door to the bottom of the stairs, then up the stairs – a distance of about 50 feet – and caught her safely before she tumbled down two steps! I was incredibly sharp and fast.

On another occasion, I visited my sidai, Sifu Yeong Khuen Chi, who is now the grandmaster of Georgetown Chin Woo Association, and is an expert of Praying Mantis Kungfu and Eagle Claw Kungfu. He lived in his old flat on a fourth floor in Brown Garden in Penang.

I shouted for my sidai from the ground, My sijie, Sister Kam, who is Uncle Righteousness' eldest daughter and Yeong Khuen Chi's cousine, emerged at a window and asked me to go up. There was no lift, so I ran up the stairs.

When my sijie opened the door, she was shocked to see me waiting. "How come you are so fast?" she asked in disbelief.

"I ran up the stairs," I replied.

"I just walked from the window to the table to get the key to open the door (a distance of about 10 feet), and you are already here!"

If I remember these events correctly which happened long ago, they occurred before my training in jumping up two piles of bricks. I attributed these abilities to my earlier training in Thousand Steps. Whatsoever, these abilities are not the hallmark of the Art of Lightness, though the Art of Lightness would certainly have enhanced these abilities. The hallmark of the Art of Lightness is to jump up high, like jump up a tree to make my wife happy.

Thank you for your compliments that my courses are constantly getting better and better. Many people have told me this fact.

Many years ago when my teaching efficiency was probably less than a quarter of what it is now, Jean, our Chief Instructor in Canada, told me that she had such wonderful benefits in a course that she thought the next course could not be better. But when she took the same course repeated the next time, she found it even better than her expectation.

Just before she took the same course the third time, she said to herself that the course be better but the difference could not be great. She was pleasantly surprised that it was better beyond comparison. It must be the climax, she thought. It could not be better any more. But when she took the same course again, she found herself blown away.

An important reason why I could improve my teaching methodology is because I teach many classes, which give me a lot of opportunities to improve my teaching. I teach more than 100 classes a year, compared to about 2 or 3 classes other masters teach. For most masters who teach the orthodox way, their students follow them throughout the year every

year.

Another reason is that I have a lot of chi kung and kungfu classics to refer to. These classics give me an illuminating picture of what past masters did.

Question 6

I would really like to learn the Art of Lightness one day!! A lot of people don't understand the purpose, but I'd love to learn it.

I can sometimes "think" the Art of Lightness, like the floating and controlling of energy in the body in the pattern of the Crane when coming down, or focusing the mind to a point at the sky, and running up a wall, and attacking a horde of enemies from the sides this way.

Haha, these are just fantasies, but it's interesting nevertheless.

Tim

Answer

Please read Answer 5 above, as much of the material there is relevant for this Question here.

It is great to have the Art of Lightness, but apart from novelty and preserving a classical art, its practical uses in our modern world are not many. This in fact is the main reason why I did not continue my training in the Art of Lightness after recovering from my injury sustained during training.

The main uses of the Art of Lightness are to jump high, like over a wall, and to run fast and far, like running a marathon. Even when you can find a generous master willing to teach you, you have to dedicate yourself to practice daily for three years. Nowadays, you don't normally need to jump up a roof or over a wall. If you need to jump up two or three floors, it is easier and more comfortable to take a lift. And it is also easier and more comfortable to drive a car if you wish to travel long distance fast.

When practitioners are sick, practicing the Art of Lightness does not overcome their illness, but aggravate it. If they are already healthy, their training can maintain their good health and promote their vitality. I am not sure of longevity for Art of Lightness practitioners.

You can overcome any illness by practicing Eighteen Jewels or Eighteen Lohan Hands. You are also sure of longevity as well as good health and vitality with your Eighteen Jewels or Eighteen Lohan Hands training. The time and effort needed to practice Eighteen Jewels and Eighteen Lohan Hands are both less and easier, and the training is also generally more pleasant.

The risks of wrong practice are much higher and the adverse effects more serious in the Art of Lightness. If one follows the instructions for the Art of Lightness in a book or from the internet, the chance of his wrong practice is as high as 70%, which is very high.

For Eighteen Jewels and Eighteen Lohan Hands, the risk is about 30%, and the adverse effects are not serious, unless students practicing on their own try to use high-level skills to operate these low-level techniques. But we are very fortunate in Shaolin Wahnam. Whatever adverse effects sustained from wrong training can be immediately erased by chi flow. Hence, in our case the risk is null.

For the Art of Lightness where adverse effects from wrong practice is serious, like losing the ability to produce children, which also means losing the joy of wholesome sex, even if there is a risk of 10% he should not attempt it. His training should be perfectly safe before he attempts it, especially in today's world where the Art of Lightness serves as a hobby and not a need.

The risks are high not because the instructions are wrong. In fact the instructions are usually correct. Then why do students practicing the correct instructions still have 70% chance of practicing wrongly if they follow the instructions exactly?

There are two reasons. One, the instructions are incomplete. Two, even when the instructions are complete, students practicing on their own do not have the necessary skills.

The instructions may be incomplete in two aspects, quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, suppose there are five steps in one movement, but only one step is mentioned. Qualitatively, words are inadequate to explain what exactly needs to be done in a step.

Let us take a simple example, that of jumping up from a hole to the level ground. Normally the instruction is just that when recorded in a classic: "Jump up from the hole to the level ground".

Other steps are usually not described, such as bend your knees slightly as you begin to jump, spring up with your toes, gently breath in though your nose in the process of jumping up and let you chi rise to your chest, gently hold your breath in the process, breathe out through your mouth as you land, and let your chi gently sink to your feet.

Classics were not written as teaching manuals. They were meant for students who practiced under the supervision of a master, and also meant as a concise record for posterity. Instructions like the examples above which students practicing with a master would know, were not given.

Even if instructions are given in full, words are not adequate to describe exactly what students have to do. For example, in the full instructions above how much they should bend their knees or how should they spring up with their toes, cannot be adequately described in words. Only an experienced teacher seeing their students perform can tell whether the students are carrying out the instructions correctly. And if they make mistakes, it is through direct example that the teacher can show the correct movements.

The second important reason is that even if students learning from a book or the internet follow the given instructions exactly, they may not have the skills to do so. For example, letting chi gently sink to the feet is a special skill, without which students cannot perform the technique correctly even when they understand the meaning of the instruction. It is likely that they perform this skill wrongly and derive hernia or varicose veins instead.

Not realizing that skills are more important than techniques is a main reason why many people try to learn an art from a book, or mistakenly thinking that all teachers teaching the art are the same. They make a big mistake of thinking that if they have the techniques they will know the art.

Thinking, but unlike the way you have described, is an advanced aspect of the training for the Art of Lightness. It is intuitive thinking, and is referred to as the mind aspect. The other aspect is referred to as the energy aspect, and it deals with regulating breathing and directing energy flow. Physical movements like jumping and landing are referred to as the physical aspect.

Thinking with the rational mind is intellectualizing, which is one of the don'ts in our three golden rules of practice, which are don't worry, don't intellectualize, and enjoy your practice. These three golden rules can also be rewardingly applied to everyday life.

When you eat your breakfast, for example, don't worry how you are going to eat your breakfast, don't intellectualize on why you have to eat your breakfast and just enjoy eating your breakfast.

If you aim to become a successful chi kung healer, don't worry on how to start chi kung healing, don't intellectualize on why you become a chi kung healer and not a medical doctor, and start healing people with chi kung and enjoying doing so.

Question 7

When I learned Shaking Fingers at the Healing course, I felt my scalp deeply massaged. It was deeper than my scalp, it went deep inside to the nerve endings and everything else that is in there. It also became incredibly itchy. My students get the same effect!

Would it be true to say that this 'simple' exercise would be good for people who suffer from Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's and perhaps even Alzheimer's?

Sifu Joan Browne, Chief Instructor of Shaolin Wahnam Ireland

Answer

You had such high-level result performing a low-level exercise because even without your conscious knowing you employed high-level skills. You operated at the mind level, which is the highest level to perform any chi kung exercise.

This is a problem or privilege – depending on one's perspective – that many of our students face, often without their being consciously aware of it.

Usually it brings remarkable result, and the students are surprised. Sometimes it results in over-cleansing, and they are also surprised.

In my teaching, especially in my Intensive Chi Kung Course or high-level regional courses like Cosmic Shower and Bone Marrow Cleansing, I make it a point to tell students not to over-train. I tell beginning students to purposely perform at a low level, and that even if they have a quarter of the benefits they get at my courses, it is more than enough for their needs, and it more than what most other people get in their training.

Advanced practitioners can understand my advice, but beginning students even if they understand what I say, may not appreciate its significance. It is natural that people want to get the best they can. Hence, they go for the most powerful techniques and skills. Not many people have the wisdom to realize that if the exercises they perform are more powerful than their needs, not only they do not get the best result, it may be harmful to them.

Even when they understand this, because what most other chi kung practitioners practice is merely gentle physical exercise without any chi kung benefit, our beginning students, and sometimes even our advanced ones, do not appreciate that practicing at a low level means practicing at a low level, and not practicing at a level slightly lower than what has been taught at the

course, which is still a very high level.

An example will make this point clear. The figures are not exact, but they give a clear picture of what is happening.

In an Intensive Chi Kung Course or a regional course on Cosmic Shower, I ask students to perform Carrying the Moon, and lead them to have a cosmic shower. Then I ask them to let cosmic energy strengthen them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The amount of increased energy the students feel is incredible. Let us quantify the increase to be 10,000 units of energy.

For other practitioners to have an increase of 10,000 units of energy, it would take them more than a year. They would not have this increase in the very first year of their training. For the first few years they would be performing chi kung techniques as gentle physical exercise, without any notion of energy.

Only after a few years when they have picked up the skills of generating an energy flow, can they start to accumulate energy, all these without their conscious knowing. The amount of energy they accumulate for each session is not much – usually too little for them to feel it. Suppose they accumulate 100 units of energy per session, which is a generous estimate.

They do not accumulate 100 units of energy every training session. They only do so when their performance of techniques is perfect, rendering their practice from gentle physical exercise to chi kung. Suppose they unknowingly perform chi kung and not just gentle physical exercise every three days, which again is a generous estimate. But they will not take 100 practice sessions or 300 days to accumulate 10,000 units of energy because as they do not accumulate energy every day, they miss the benefit of accumulated effect. Let us be generous again, and estimate that they take one year.

Our students can build 10,000 units of energy in one day, whereas other practitioners need one year. Even when our students perform at only 10%, they can produce 1,000 units of energy, which is 10 times more than what other practitioners produce in each productive session. This gives an ideal of how much our students can purposely lower themselves so as not to over-train.

Chi kung operates at three levels:

1. Form.
2. Breathing.
3. Mind.

The division into form, breathing and mind is for convenience. All the three components – form, breathing and mind – are present in all chi kung. As a rough estimate, the proportion of benefit obtain from form, breathing and mind is 1, 3, 6.

This means that of the 10,000 units of energy derived from a chi kung exercise, 1,000 units is due to form, 3,000 units is due to breathing, and 6,000 units is due to mind. This applies to chi kung in general, like in dynamic patterns such as Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon.

But in advanced chi kung like Cosmic Shower, as those who have performed this exercise can tell, form and breathing are preliminary, more than 90% of the energy is obtain through mind.

It is a common mistake to think that to operate at the mind level, a practitioner must visualize. Indeed, for untrained persons, visualization will distract from the mind level. Although visualization is used in some cases, like in Cosmic Shower, it is used intuitively, nor rationalizing or intellectualizing.

How effective a practitioner operates at the mind level is how deep he enters into a chi kung state of mind. As all our students enter into a chi kung state of mind right at the beginning of any chi kung exercise, they operate at the mind level, with or without visualization, and with or without their realizing it.

It is this chi kung state of mind that is a crucial difference between how our students and other practitioners practice chi kung. Later I introduced the chi kung state of mind, known as entering Zen or entering Tao, into our Shaolin Kungfu, Taijiquan and all styles of kungfu practiced in our school. At once it transforms our kungfu, whatever its style, and even for beginners, into an internal art.

We have to thank the great chi kung master from China, Sifu Yan Xin, for the chi kung state of mind. When I read about the incredible achievements of Sifu Yan Xin, he emphasized the chi kung state of mind, a term which I believe he coined.

This reminded me of a modern chi kung classic many years ago, written by Sifu Liu Gui Zhen, who I believe was the first to use the term “chi kung” in modern times. Previously, it was known as “bei kung” or internal art. What Sifu Liu Gui Zhen wrote puzzled me at that time, though I fully understood what he wrote.

He defined chi kung as performing relevant techniques in a special state of mind. I was puzzled because he did not mention about chi or about breathing. In other words, according to Sifu Liu Gui Zhen, when one performs any technique in this special state of mind even when there is no obvious chi flow and no conscious regulating of breathing, it is chi kung.

I also recalled what my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, told me. If your mind were wandering, you should not practice any chi kung as there would be no benefit.

Some of the greatest lessons are learned outside formal classes. At the time these greatest of lessons did not seem specially important, but they have brought fantastic benefits to our school.

Yes, it is true that “simple” exercises can be excellent for people who suffer from Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and any diseases!

In the chi kung paradigm, any disease, including Alzheimer’s, is due to energy blockage. When a practitioner performs Shaking Fingers, which will generate an energy flow which can eventually clear blockage and overcome any disease. How effective a practitioner can achieve this result depends on how well he uses his skills.

For an untrained person, when he shakes his fingers, as what the technique Shaking Fingers actually is, he does so physically, and nothing significant happens, except that he may tire his hands, or if he does so gently he may relax them.

For a chi kung practitioner not of our school, when he shakes his hands, also nothing significant happens. But if he persists on doing this exercise for some time, if he is lucky he may perform the technique ideally, spontaneously generating an energy flow, usually without his conscious knowing. This energy flow is not strong, and may just give him a tinkling sensation on his fingers, which he may regard as marvelous.

But you are a highly skilled practitioner. When you shake your fingers, even casually like when you did while just picking up the technique during the Chi Kung Healing Course, you generate a tremendous amount of energy flow that flows up your arms to your head, into the bone marrow and cleanses it. Bone marrow in Chinese terms refers to nerves in Western terms.

Hence, by performing Shaking Fingers you are able to cleanse the nerves in your head as well as all over your nervous system. You are also able to transmit the skill to your students.

As Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's are problems of the nervous system, Bone Marrow Cleansing using the technique of Shaking Fingers or other suitable techniques is effective in overcoming those diseases. Bone Marrow Cleansing is also effective in overcoming diseases like allergies and auto-immune syndrome.

I do not know the Western medical explanation for Alzheimer's, but from the chi kung perspective which I have used to help countless people overcome so-called incurable diseases, Alzheimer's and any diseases are caused by energy blockage. Once the blockage is cleared, the patient will regain his natural good health, regardless of what name we call the disease and whether we know the intermediate causes.

Those who are not familiar with chi kung or traditional Chinese medical philosophy may think the concept of energy blockage weird. But if they suffer from so-called incurable diseases and do not bother to check whether our claims are true, and if true they do not seek us for help, they are not just prejudiced but are actually foolish.

I have helped many people overcome Alzheimer's, and the following story would be inspiring. An elderly student e-mailed me that his wife of about the same age suffered from Alzheimer's, and that he requested me to give her a personalized chi kung course.

I replied that she needed not come for a personalized course, which was expensive. I could teach him some relevant exercises which he could teach her. If she practiced regularly her Alzheimer's would be overcome. As he had attended my Intensive Chi Kung Course as well as Intensive Taijiquan Course before, he would have the necessarily skills to impart to her. If they had any doubt, they could check with a Chief Instructor who was staying nearby.

But he wrote back and begged me for the personalized course. He must love his wife very much.

The personalized course was held in Cinta Sayang in Sungai Petani. His wife's Alzheimer's was really bad, far worse than what I thought. She could not remember the move I just taught her! But she completed the course successfully. I was so sure of her recovery that I did not follow up to ask him about it. But events later indicated that she recovered completely.

As a sideline, the Chief Instructor told me that this student endearingly said his wife as “cheap”. If he did not pay an expensive price for the course, his wife would not practice and therefore would not recover. There was much wisdom in what he said.

Many years later the student wrote to me again, telling me that he could not walk. He requested for a personalized course. I did not ask him the cause of his inability to walk, as I did not need to because ultimately the cause was energy blockage.

This time the personalized course was held in Copthorne Hotel in Penang. The student arrived on a wheel-chair, accompanied by his wife, who could still recognize me despite her serious Alzheimer’s before and many years in between since recovery.

The course was also very successful. Many people may find it hard to believe, but the next day the student could walk and run. I told them to throw away the wheel-chair, which they did, and go to town for shopping. The wife could recognize her husband and bring him back to the hotel after a good time in town.

At first I was not noticeable in Copthorne Hotel, which had a lot of guests. But later every member of the staff seemed to know me. I casually asked someone about the sudden change.

“Of course we all know you. You are a miraculous healer.”

“A miraculous healer?”

“A guest checked in on a wheel-chair. The next day we were all shocked to see him going to town unaided!”

I can’t remember what I taught him or his wife earlier. Some or all the exercises must be from the 18 Jewels.