

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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## MASTER ZHANG JIE WORKSHOP

Thur, May 7th, 10am Pa Kua  
Master Zhang will complete the last of  
four Beijing Pa Kua Chi Kung  
exercises.

## PRACTICING COMPANY

Two of the most common  
complaints I get are: 'I don't have

enough room to practice', and 'Since  
classes are only once a week, I never  
practice on my own'.

Once we move the classes outside  
there will be plenty of room to  
practice. Even if you are not in the  
specific class that's being taught there  
is plenty of room to practice. It's  
always nicer to practice in a park

among the trees, and to have company  
to support your practice. The security  
of being with a group is nice also.

I hope that one day we'll have a  
huge group, various classes, styles  
and people practicing their art  
morning and evenings throughout the  
summer.

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## THE UNIQUENESS OF FORMS

In all the Nei Jia we have many, many forms and  
styles. When we come down to it, every person has  
their own form and style within each style.

Each form also has its own style, emphasis,  
personality and training flavor. The Inner palms,  
simplified, linking forms, short forms, weapons,  
applications, long forms, all have a unique individual  
quality. Some are enjoyable, some challenging, others  
we may hate (why?).

Some of these forms serve to give us basics, a  
certain body vocabulary so we can advance onto the  
more complex forms. Some forms start us out with  
easy simple movements getting us conditioned and  
strong so we can handle what's to come. Some forms,  
like the long forms, begin easy and get gradually  
more difficult and strenuous.

The various systems are set up, and usually  
taught, from the easiest, simplest to the difficult and  
strenuous. This is the genius of these arts. The  
movements and forms are a gentle method of getting  
stronger, centered and healthier. As you practice you  
shouldn't really be sore after a practice. You  
shouldn't notice your strength or flexibility  
increasing, but if you look back a year you should see

a great difference. I'm always amazed at how subtle  
these arts are on all levels. Gentle yet our strength,  
endurance, centering, chi and power increase.

Though the beginning forms are BASIC,  
beginning forms are a very important part of our  
process. We begin to learn to move, center,  
concentrate, and focus our chi. Though these forms  
are still complex, they're the no-frills forms. The  
lessons they teach are invaluable, they develop our  
foundation quickly and securely. Once someone  
finishes the basic forms (passed trying to just  
remember them), there is a feeling of "I now know  
Tai Chi/Pa Kua." There is also a misconception that  
the other forms are just more movements, or more  
complex patterns. The change in complexity of forms  
aren't just in the movements but also in the energy  
level, mental focus, centering, and body wisdom. As  
we progress to the advanced forms as they lead us  
deeper within ourselves, we're no longer studying a  
form, we're studying ourselves. The arts seem to  
begin with a light rub down, and gradually  
progresses to deep tissue work. This is the true art.

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## INNER LEVELS - THE MIRROR

The uniqueness and wholistic levels that the Internal Arts make available to us as we study is truly wonderful. On one level we can merely exercise and move our bodies through it's range of movements, training all muscles and nerves. On another level the movements and breathing can teach us how to release our mental and physical tensions, at the same time we exercise our bodies. On still another level, we can study the Yin/Yang balance. This study begin within ourselves with the weight shifts and gradually shows us the interconnectedness within our daily activities.

These arts are almost "One size fits all." We can practice the forms and arts to whatever degree we want to, need to, or are willing to pursue. Beginners only have time to focus on the outer movements, trying to remember the moves, thinking about what comes next, and the body coordination. Even so, this level begins to get the benefits of the exercise and tranquilization the forms have. For some, this is enough. Just something to relax with each day. This is where the popularity of the arts are, something once learned it's ours, no need for a special place or equipment.

If we continue to refine and study the forms and art, instead of merely practicing them, we gradually proceed into the next level. This begins with getting deeper into the movements, muscles, balance, center, coordination, and thoughts. Practicing at this level takes much more patience and dedication to practice daily. As we approach this level our practice of forms begins to slow down and our breathing begins to become longer and deeper. There is more *internal* action happening. Our mind tunes in to where our excess physical tension is. The movements show us how to dissolve it and keep the entire body moving smoothly as one unit.

This level can be very frustrating at times since we begin to notice how tense we actually are. Our awareness increases, our mind studies the process of the movements, not the forms. This level is after we've done the form enough times we could do it in our sleep. Master Tchoung and Gao-fu consider this the TRUE ART, the beginning is merely 'playing' the art. This is where the meditation begins, our mind becomes focused and aware in an open concentration. Our mind *is* our body from head to toe, feeling, moving, balancing, flowing...

From here we can approach another deep level of training, one I call THE MIRROR. This level sometimes happens quickly with some, years with others. I've had some members approach this in the Chi Kung movements after only a few months. This is a method our body wisdom forces us to deal with certain issues, or face ourselves. A meditation teacher explained it that when the conscious mind calms down the inner

tensions float to the surface like air bubbles. This level isn't consistent, it may happen once in a while as we practice, or it may only happen in certain forms.

As practice begins, the body relaxes and the flow of the movements proceed. Certain thoughts or emotions absorb or surface to our mind as we practice. I remember one period when, out of no where, I got very angry without any apparent reason to do so. This was actually the first time this happened. As I continued my practice I got angrier. After the solo form I had to do the fast form to release all the anger and tension, then I felt better. With each successive practice I began to gain insight into where the anger was coming from, why it was there. Over a period of a month I was able to see and deal with the source of the anger. One beginner tapped into this in the chi kung and decided to quit. Her comment was, "I can't do this without having my therapist here as I practice."

I believe this is part of the *Inner Alchemy* of these arts. A refinement of ourselves, our self-cultivation. The internal arts are so wholistic they leave no stone untouched, we just don't notice the work happening. The more we focus and study, the deeper our level of concentration, the deeper our own alchemy.

Sifu uses the analogy of practicing the internal arts with making bread. We have all the ingredients within us but they aren't mixed very well. When we practice, it's like mixing the dough and kneading the bread. All the ingredients must be mixed properly for the bread to come out tasting as it should. If you have chunks of flour the bread won't bake properly or taste good at all. The mixing/practicing is to develop perfect consistency. This mixing/kneading happens on all levels: physical, mental, spiritual. It all happen to varying degrees also, the depth is determined by our personalities, time permitted to practice, interests, or perhaps our own inner wisdom guiding us.