



Linda's T'ai Chi

Weekly Handout May 24, 2020

Silk Reeling

In T'ai Chi practice, silk reeling is the concept of **continuous motion**. As we move from one posture to another, our bodies, hands, arms, fingers never stop. Stopping is like kinking a hose- the water flow stops. When we stop the motion, we stop the flow of energy, the flow of air and the sense of calm we are trying to achieve.

Silk reeling refers to a set of **neigong** (内功, *internal* movement principles expressed in traditional styles of **t'ai chi ch'uan** (太極拳), but especially emphasized by the **Chen 陳** and **Wu 吳家** styles. It is a concept that is important to Yang style as well.

"The name derives from the twisting and spiraling movements of the silkworm larva as it wraps itself in its cocoon, and to the metaphorical principle of "reeling the **silk** from a **silk worm's cocoon**". In order to draw out the silk successfully the action must be smooth and consistent without jerking or changing direction sharply. Too fast, the silk breaks, too slow, it sticks to itself and becomes tangled. Thus silk reeling movements are continuous, cyclic, twisting (turning) and untwisting actions. "(Concepts of T'ai Chi Ch'uan)

For those of you who work with yarn, the concept is the same as pulling silk; gently unspooling with enough energy to pull but not too much as to tangle or break the yarn. Pull too softly and you get nothing, pull too hard and the yarn breaks or tangles.

Silk reeling is important because it is intended to convey the intent you hold in your mind with every movement and the sensation that you are going for. Each movement is long and continual with slight tension. So, think of every movement as possessing both hard and soft energy - yin and yang.

If you have ever done calligraphy or perhaps painting, particularly water color, you probably understand the concept of moving the brush in one continuous motion. Hesitating or stopping will cause unevenness in the line or the depth of color.

I would suggest you take brush knee or cloud hands and practice continuity of motion.

In Shibashi, practice going from mist rising on the lake to open your heart to see the mountain- no breaks, no stopping,

Slow, continuous movements synchronized with your deep breaths.

This takes some practice but we have time. Yes?

Have fun, strive for progress not perfection and enjoy

Peace,

Linda