



Linda's T'ai Chi
Weekly Handout July 26, 2020

The Way of the Water



The practice of T'ai Chi is replete with metaphors. One of these is "being like water".

It is said that T'ai Chi energy is like water that supports a moving boat. Water can support the weight of a leaf or a mighty ship. In this way, water is adaptable; applying only the force that is needed. This is the T'ai Chi way. Softness and force (energy)

T'ai Chi practice also tells us that we should advance like water- finding the gaps in the opponent's performance and taking advantage of the weakness. We should move like the river, flow like the river or surge like the river. This is about energy and the flow of energy throughout our bodies.

We practice this concept by being rooted in our feet with the flow of energy upward through our legs, hips, and waist and finally expressed in our hands and fingertips.

As I write about water I am reminded of a childhood memory. My mother was born and raised in Pittsburg, PA and although after the war, she and my father moved to New Jersey, her sister and family stayed in Pittsburg. My mother and father and my 2 brothers spent many summers on the shore. This one summer, my mother's sister and family joined us for a week on the Jersey shore. This was my Aunt's first experience with the ocean. I remember my mother telling my Aunt to never turn your back to the ocean. The memory of this day is clear in my mind. On this day my Aunt frolicked in the ocean waves. Upon leaving the ocean she turned her back to the ocean. She was so excited, I could tell by the big smile on her face. She was hit by a wave that knocked her over, arms, legs flailing as she and the wave crashed on the shore line. She was not injured but the lesson of never turning your back to the ocean stayed with me. I remember that now as write about water. I have a healthy respect for the ocean and the power and force contained in water.

A babbling brook may feel one way to us and an ocean wave may feel entirely different. T'ai Chi uses both of these metaphors for how we move and feel energy and force in our bodies. In some circles, T'ai Chi Ch'uan means ultimate or supreme fist or ultimate and supreme *force*. We can be soft and feel the energy or force from within. This comes from our posture and stance and remembering that T'ai Chi is based on circles or spirals.

It is said in T'ai Chi literature that ultimately the softest thing in the world will overcome the hardest.

"...the river cuts the stone, but the stone shapes the course of the river."

The physics of water is complex at least for me and I dare not step into that field.

The Way of Water is a metaphor for how we feel the energy in our bodies, how we move and how we think as we perform our postures.

The lesson is to be soft, feel the energy from our feet upward through our bodies to our fingertips floating on our deepest breath; and go with the flow.

Peace,

Linda

