

## Quiet Cultivation Centre within the Taoist Tai Chi Centre: An Integral Path of Physical & Spiritual Development

**F**ung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism observes the unified teachings of the three religions of China: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Its mission is to deliver both the living and the dead from suffering. It does so in three different but interrelated ways: by promoting acts of compassion to others, by observing religious rituals and ceremonies, and by providing training to facilitate the dual cultivation of the body and the mind. These are the Three Vehicles of Taoist Training.

### **Carrying out the Mission**

All of the three religions mentioned above encourage us to transcend our earthly selves and become enlightened. Buddhism calls this reaching Nirvana; Taoism calls this achieving the Tao; Confucianism calls this becoming a Sage.

In all three religions, the path toward enlightenment is the same. It starts and ends with compassion toward all sentient beings.

*Performing good deeds and rendering service to the community* cultivates compassion. From the karma and retribution point of view, such acts reduce our karmic burden, our transgressions against nature and others in our past lives. Selflessly helping others trains us to put less emphasis on counting personal gains and losses. This is an important step toward transcending ourselves and is a key part of what the three religions understand as cultivation of the mind or spirit.

*Observation of rituals and ceremonies* is an integral part of any religious practice. In Taoism and Buddhism, the rituals pay respect to the Deities, ask for blessings for the living, and comfort the dead. In Confucianism, there are sacred rites for many things including favorable weather and good harvest. It is also said that “a sutra is a path.” The act of chanting the words of a sutra or scripture reminds us of

the teachings of the Buddhas, Immortals and Sages. The chanting in the ceremonies is also an excellent form of exercise that works on the respiratory system and promotes circulation in the body.

*The dual cultivation of both body and mind* is unique to Taoism. This is the reason why, in addition to techniques to calm and empty the mind, the Taoist tradition also has a well-developed system of exercises to improve health and nurture life. As training in Taoism progresses, these two aspects are impossible to separate; nurturing the body must also involve cultivating the mind or spirit, and vice versa.

### **How the Programs at the Taoist Tai Chi Centre Help Fung Loy Kok Advance its Mission.**

Fung Loy Kok and the Taoist Tai Chi Society jointly run the programs at the Taoist Tai Chi Centre in accordance with its mission. All programs aim to develop the participant’s heart, mind, and body. However, some programs will emphasize one of the Three Vehicles more than the others.

In the earlier times, the Rituals, Ceremonies, and Dual Cultivation techniques were generally the special domain of the priesthood or monastic practitioners. For example, the Confucian prayer rites were performed by the

Emperor or the Governor; Buddhist and Taoist meditation were taught only to temple initiates. It was at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that these arts began to become available outside of the monastic community. The founder of the Taoist Tai Chi Society and Fung Loy Kok, Master Moy Lin-shin, devoted decades of his life to develop these arts of cultivating body, heart and mind to make them accessible and beneficial to everyone, regardless of their physical condition. However, the roots of these arts are in the monastic tradition. Our experience over the past 35 years shows that a practitioner's progress can be very much enhanced by living in a monastic setting even for a short period.

Workshops that Focus on Dual Cultivation are those that help the participants work on the Tai Chi, Lok Hup Ba Fa, Hsing-I, Sword, or Saber sets.

These are arts transmitted to us from our founder, Master Moy Lin-shin. Over the past 35 years, they have been proven to be very effective to help people regain, maintain and improve health. These arts can provide such health benefits because they have their origin in the Taoist internal alchemy. To put it simply, alchemy in Taoism is a process of changing and transforming the body to the original healthy state. This starts with the transformation of the physical body. When the physical body is healthy and strong and the mind is quiet, then the transformation of internal energies can occur. Taoist exercises such as Tai Chi and Lok Hup are the results of centuries of Taoist experience and knowledge of changing and transforming the body. At the same time, the practice of these movements helps to focus and calm the mind of the practitioners. Such focus helps to drive out stray thoughts in the mind and is a crucial

part of the transformation the body and the mind. Thus the practice of these arts should also be considered spiritual work, achieving the aim of cultivating both the body and the mind.

These programs can be held over a weekend or over a week. The focus is on learning to optimize the forms of these sets of movements in order to maximize the health benefits from the exercise. At the same time, the tranquil setting of the Centre and the disciplined and monastic lifestyle observed during the workshop helps the participants to become detached from their day to day life and concentrate on their personal cultivation. In the long run, when our personal development is advanced, we become better equipped to help others in their development. The ultimate goal of cultivation should be a selfless one, instead of one of personal achievement.

Rituals and ceremonies will be held at the new temple. The kitchen and accommodation of the Taoist Tai Chi Centre will allow us to conduct ceremonies that continue for multiple days and adhere to strict temple guidelines for the rituals. For example, there are certain rituals that traditionally start at midnight and then continue until daybreak. For some elaborate ceremonies, the chanters are required to observe a vegetarian diet and abstain from sensory stimulation and entertainment for three days prior to the ceremony. Such requirements are impossible to fulfill when the participants have to live off the temple premises.

The health recovery program at the Centre is set up to provide service to those from the special needs community. There are two parts to this program. On the one hand, the program is a form of service to the

community, as the participants with health problems are helped by the practice of Taoist Tai Chi. On the other hand, the assistants learn to adapt the Taoist Tai Chi movements to help those with limited range of motion. There is usually a one-to-one ratio of participants and assistants in this program. Over the course of the week, the assistants work closely with the participants. This process engages them in caring for others without consideration for personal gain. In other words, they develop their compassion as they become more receptive to the sufferings of others. During the health recovery weeks, other Taoist arts such as chanting and meditation are also used to complement the Taoist Tai Chi exercises. It is said that in health care, the attitude of the patients often determines the outcome of the treatment. At the Taoist Tai Chi Centre, the participants stay in an environment away from the noise and pollution of the city. At every waking moment they are encouraged by assistants with a positive attitude. They become a part of a community with the common goal of living life to the fullest despite their health problems. And they are themselves participating in the process of dual cultivation through their practice of Taoist Tai Chi.

### **Conclusion**

All of the programs offered at the Taoist Tai Chi Centre in Orangeville, conducted in partnership with the Taoist Tai Chi Society, are organized to help fulfill the

mission and objectives of Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism.

The sleeping quarters, cafeteria, and practice halls are essential to enhance the development of the participants. The seminary of learning portion of the Taoist Tai Chi Centre is in fact an integral part of the ancient tradition of spiritual training that Fung Loy Kok represents. We believe that the goal of advancement in our personal training is to make us better able to help others.

This is exemplified in *The Taoist Sutra of Purity and Tranquility* (清靜經):

“When the true Tao is entered,  
It is realized.  
Although we speak of “realized”,  
Actually, there is nothing to attain,  
Rather, we speak of realization  
When someone begins to transform the  
myriad things.”<sup>i</sup>

(既入真道，名為得道。雖名得道，實  
無所得。為化眾生)

Therefore, all the programs of training and development at the Centre ultimately help Fung Loy Kok fulfill its mission of delivering all sentient beings from suffering.

- By Mun Fong Woon with Sean Dennison,  
directors, Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism

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<sup>i</sup> Translated by Livia Kohn in “*The Taoist Experience*”, SUNY, 1993, p. 28