



Tai Chi promotes all-round Holistic health of body, mind and spirit. Even in paradise, tensions can mount, so what better way to find yourself, and your own special path, than through the ancient Chinese practice of Tai Chi

by Vivienne Sharman-Lewis

**N**ot just a system of physical exercise, Tai Chi means 'the way', 'the path' - a universal concept, implying conscious thought and participation. 'Chi' is life force or vital energy and 'tai' means great. Hence, Tai Chi is the path to self-discovery on your own special path through life.

In 'I Ching', the classical Chinese literature, sections of which date back to the twelfth century BC, we hear of the state of harmony that exists in all nature, the Tai Chi, the movement and interchange of opposites, balancing the 'Yang' (or light) and Yin (darkness). Life is seen as a dance, interplay of opposites, reflected in physical movement by the exercise system Tai Chi Chuan.

The earliest reference of anything related to Tai Chi was around 2700 BC, when Huang Ti, the legendary Yellow Emperor of China practiced

special exercises to maintain health, based on the observation of animals. Then around the 13th century, the exercises appear to have joined forces with martial arts, which were, at that time, practiced to a very high standard by the Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist monks

On a physical level, Tai Chi promotes the all-round holistic health of body, mind and spirit. Numerous independent scientific studies, both in the West and in China and Japan have proved, beyond doubt, the enormous benefits that Tai Chi can bring in terms of good health, recovery from illness and the strengthening of the immune system.

#### **Body**

The graceful flowing movements as practiced in Tai Chi warm and mobilize joints, tendons and muscles, encouraging the flow of synovial

fluid into the joint capsule to lubricate, and thus allow, joints to move more freely within the joint capsule.

Muscles are warmed from within to flow with you without injury, then, stretched dynamically, to gradually increase the range of movement around each joint.

Muscular endurance is increased in the postural supportive muscles of the trunk, while muscles of the thighs, hips and calves are strengthened.

#### **Mind**

By focusing the mind on the rhythmic movements of body and breath, the mind is stilled and, concentration, the precursor of meditation, is improved. With practice the routine becomes a moving meditation, de-stressing troubled erratic thought patterns and relaxing and releasing tension blockages with-in the body to allow the energies to flow freely, thus promoting general health.

Motor fitness, the mind body connection, one of the major components of all-round fitness, namely co-ordination, balance, agility, reaction

time, along with memory, that so often declines with age is stimulated and improved.

#### **Spirit**

By focusing inwards, we locate that oasis of calm within us, 'peace beyond all understanding' and find ourselves by connecting to the powers that be, whether we relate to it as God, the universal spirit, nature power, what ever, and by connecting with our inner being become more aware of our spiritual entity beyond the physical.

So where in Tenerife can you find and experience this ancient art? Practitioners of Tai Chi are a little thin on the ground in the South, however, one lady who uses Tai Chi and Chi Kung, a minimalist version, that is closely allied to, and predating Tai Chi, as the base of her classes is Marie Carr (FRSA), who re-located to Tenerife in April 2006.

"Before leaving the U.K, the National Health Service were already aware of the benefits of Tai Chi, in the treatment of conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, the elderly and infirm,

and had agreed to fund the 'Positive Health Program', a charitable organization, that promoted the practice of Tai Chi" commented Marie. One such MS sufferer, Ben Marshall, who recently spent time in Tenerife writing a book, noted that practicing Tai Chi had helped him recover his balance, improve his movement quality, and made him more content with his life. Marie finds that the climate and natural atmosphere of Tenerife make a perfect environment in which to experience the profound relaxation and reflection that comes with the practice of Tai Chi. Another of her students found that her combination of Tai Chi, Chi Kung, meditation and breathing exercises, empowered him to cope with his own medical condition.

Whether, you seek to improve your general health and fitness, de-stress and find peace, or would like to achieve balance of mind, body and spirit, Tai Chi offers a proven system to take you on your own special path to you.

*To find out more about Tai Chi classes in Tenerife ring 647631674*

