

An interview with Master CHEE SOO in April '92
President of the International Taoist Society
Interviewer - JOHN R JONES

(This article has been edited from a longer interview)

- how did you become involved with Taoism and its Arts?

Well, my father was a Chinese seaman and my mother English. My father died at sea when I was very young and my mother became seriously ill, so I ended up in a Dr. Barnado's Home, she subsequently died in Norwich without my knowledge at the time, so I grew up in the Barnado's Institution. One day, when playing with a football in Hyde Park, my ball hit an elderly gentleman on the back. On retrieving the ball I noticed he was oriental and he noticed I had similar features. To meet another Chinese in England in the early 1930's was an unusual occurrence. So we started talking and became firm friends. It turned out that he was a Taoist exile, having escaped from war-torn China, being the only surviving member of his family. He eventually adopted me and taught me all the Taoist philosophy and arts which I have lived by ever since.

- of all the Taoist Arts, which do you consider to be the most important?

Without doubt I consider the Healing Arts of paramount importance - and I have been fortunate in being allowed to help and heal many thousands of people over many years. Although T'ai Chi and Kung Fu are the most popular of the Taoist Arts, more and more people are becoming less interested in the Healing Arts. I believe it was my destiny, which put me in the right place at the right time, enabling me to meet my master CHAN LEE who taught me the secrets of the Li family styles and methods. It became my duty, when he died, to keep the ancient wisdom alive much of which has been lost in China. Although there are many family styles, the Li family style can be traced back many centuries. In ancient China all illness, sickness and disease could be cured by the Taoist Healing Arts.

- how do you set about treating someone who is sick?

After the initial diagnosis, which is an Art in itself (**CHEN TUAN**) each disease or illness is approached from 5 principal directions :

1. Taoist Long Life Dietary Health Therapy (**CH'ANG MING**) which means learning to eat and drink the right way in strict accordance with the laws of nature to achieve a balance of Yin and Yang within the body.
2. Taoist Herbal Therapy (**TS'AO YAO**) using Chinese and European herbs in teas or mixed with the diet to restore the correct balance in the body.
3. Contact Thermogenesis (**WEN CHIECH'U**) the use of various herbs and spices for compresses, poultices, and baths to improve the circulation and aid the healing process.
4. Taoist Yin/Yang massage (**ANMO**) to clear the meridian lines and either stimulate or sedate the circulation, depending on the type of illness; and (**TUINA**) the manipulation of joints and muscles.
5. Taoist Respiration Therapy (**TAO YIN**) to develop correct ways of breathing according to Yin/Yang to maintain good health and improve the body's energies.

- do you consider there to be a principal cause for the majority of diseases, and if so, what is that cause?

Although there are many causes of disease by far the greatest majority are caused by poor or wrong dietary habits. The problem is that the Traditional Western diet, for the most part, contains artificial additives and preservatives which can build up in the body over many years and cause the organs to become diseased or, at the very least, have a low resistance or immunity to infection.

What few people realise is that potatoes, tomatoes, aubergines and chilli peppers, being the same botanical family as Deadly Nightshade, contain varying amounts of [solanine](#) (a glycoalkaloid poison). If your diet contains a high intake of foods from this family, or your body has an inability to process it, then this can lead to Heart Disease, Respiratory Diseases and Arthritis.

- to go back to the Taoist Arts as a whole, do the different disciplines fall into any sort of categories?

Yes, there are three main categories which cover all the Taoist Arts, they are:

- The **Healing Arts** - which we have already discussed
- The **Taoist Cultural Arts**; and
- The **Taoist Martial Arts**

Taoist Cultural Arts - contain amongst others:

- **T'ai Chi Ch'uan** (the Taoist Supreme Ultimate) the Li family style is a true/old form of T'ai Chi practised for thousands of years. The T'ai Chi Form itself consists of 140 movements - and is a completely Yin and Yang style. It is extremely therapeutic and an aid to health, inner peace and tranquillity.
- **K'ai Men** (Taoist Yoga) is the most dynamic and rejuvenating form of Chinese Yoga, called "the Open Door" because it opens all the main joints and energy "gates".
- **Tai Chi Fei Shou** (T'ai Chi 'Flying Hands') another more expansive Form from Li style T'ai Chi
- **Tao Yin** (Breathing Exercises) which develop and maintain good health and fitness

Taoist Martial Arts (Wu Shu) contain amongst others :

- **Feng Shou Ch'uan Shu** ('Hand of the Wind' Kung Fu) an extremely mobile and fast style with a dynamic striking force; yet it is completely relaxed, enabling men, women and children of all age to practise it
- **Chi Shu** (Taoist Self-Defence) similar to Aikido, it can defend against many forms of attack
- **Shuai Chiao** a form of Chinese wrestling

The Arts also contain various weapons forms and practises within both the T'ai Chi and Feng Shou aspects.