

GRAND MASTER EDDIE WU KWONG YU

TAI CHI CHUAN IS MEDITATION IN MOTION

DURING HIS VISIT TO KIEV, GRAND MASTER EDDIE WU GAVE AN INTERVIEW TO "WARRIOR OF LIGHT" AND SPOKE ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF WU'S FAMILY STYLE, THE SOFT MARTIAL ARTS AND BRUTE FORCE, THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY ON TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS AND THE APPROPRIATE TEACHERS.

Master Wu, what do martial arts mean to you, what is their goal and purpose?

In general, martial arts is self-defence. If somebody attacks a person who knows nothing about martial arts, such a person will defend in any way possible in order to survive – pull, push, bite, anything to avoid the harm. This is not a martial art. Martial art is a certain method of how to act in any given situation (when someone strikes, pushes, uses a weapon) to neutralize an attack and stay uninjured.

There are two types of martial arts in the world: hard and soft. I won't say which ones are better or worse, I'll just show the difference. Tai Chi Chuan belongs to soft styles. When I say soft, I mean that, for Tai Chi Chuan, the biggest enemy is brute force. "Then where does the force come from?" you may ask. Force comes from the inside, filling joints and ligaments. Internal force as opposed to muscle tension. Force lies in conscious coordination and being able to use the maximum potential of your body. It involves a long learning process.

Therefore, in order to master the martial art, it is necessary, first of all, to become healthy. For this, I recommend stretching exercises as opposed to pumping muscles. It also helps to counteract old age, as when people become too old with age their joints cease to function properly. Therefore, it is necessary to train flexibility, to maintain a smooth movement, and then you can use force.

Next, let's talk about coordination, how forms interact. It's like in fencing – you should be moving together, not blocking movements. It occurs on a deeper level. However, everything comes from consciousness, so it is not only learning of movements. That is why it is important to know the change of forms at different levels: first, we

practice the form so that it becomes clear, we recognize its beauty, we give it meaning. Then we learn to fill the form with force, and only then the chi energy starts to drive the form. The final level is spiritual. That is why Tai Chi Chuan is a soft martial art compared to hard ones.

The younger generation thinks, "Okay, I'm young now; I'm 20. What happens when I hit 60? I would no longer be able to bend the timber, so what will happen? I'll have to give up; have to do what I'm able to do when I am 20. When I'm 40 I will do other things, so I will when I'm 60 and 70 and so on." In Tai Chi Chuan, we do not make hard movements or blocks, we use internal force. No, it's not slackness, it's not dancing. We practice this way to stay healthy, keep our body arranged so that our consciousness can control it. This is where the power is manifested. And this is not easy.

Another very important thing is how to be balanced. Balance keeps us from falling in old age. How can you protect yourself if you have no balance? You have to be like an immutable?? structure – keep the weight down, maintain health, train your fighting skills, then develop coordination. Pushing people is easy. The question is not to get pushed. In Tai Chi Chuan, we call it neutralization.

You have inherited Tai Chi Chuan, so to speak. For the fifth generation in a row, your family develops and extends their heritage. How do you feel about destiny deciding your destination, not you?

I have many students all over the world. For example, a representative of my school in Ukraine is Viktor. There are five thousand miles between us. I'm in the East, he's in the West. How did we meet? There are reasons for that.

So we, the Chinese, believe in fate, luck. We were lucky to have met. How did this happen, are not we from different worlds? However, we sit here

talking, because we were united by some energy. So is your question, "If I were not born in my own family, I would not be interested in Tai Chi Chuan, would I not seek answers to my questions?"

Last week, I had a seminar in Italy where one of the participants came up to me and said, "I've been tortured by some questions for twenty years, and you've answered all of them in a day!" So you have to find the right person. However, determining what is right and what is not is your responsibility; what makes sense and is logical to you, not illusion or fantasy.

Tai Chi Chuan is extremely logical: you have to do "A" and then "B" and "C". Arbitrary nonsense does not work. Tai Chi Chuan cannot be mastered without engaging brains; that is mental work. If I didn't belong to my family, I would be like everyone else – trying to find a good teacher and a good school.

Few people in the West perceive Tai Chi Chuan as a martial art. In Western people's understanding, these are wellness practices that have nothing to do with self-defense. Do you want to refute this myth?

Now many people are learning from different teachers, and there are many teachers, so people do not understand the "combat" application. Most say, "Tai Chi Chuan is something for the old people. It is so slow". In fact, Tai Chi Chuan is a martial art. It is a soft martial arts style.

My family, my great grandfather, my grandfather, and his brother taught at China's military schools – the equivalent of West Point Academy in the United States. Before them, the first generation of my family belonged to a professional military and had to teach Tai Chi Chuan in the Palace. That is why Tai Chi Chuan is not only about health, it is in truth a martial art, a soft martial art. It can heal people, but it contains also a great power.

DOSSIER

Grand Master Eddie Wu Kwong Yu is the Fifth Generation Gatekeeper of the Wu Family and Chairman of the International Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan Federation.

He was born in 1946 into a family of martial artists and masters of Tai Chi Chuan Wu style family art.

His great-great-grandfather Grand Master Wu Chuan Yau (1834-1902) was the founder of the Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan over 180 years ago. His great-grandfather, the famous master Grand Master Wu Chien Chuan (1870-1942) like Wu Chuan Yau, were soldiers of the palace battalion of the Imperial Guards in Beijing. Grand Master Wu Chien Chuan was the key influence in spreading Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan throughout China.

At the age of six, Master Eddie Wu was trained by his grandfather Grandmaster Wu Kung Yi (1900-1970) and then by his father Grandmaster Wu Tai Kwei (1923-1972). He received his undergraduate degree in aeronautical engineering in England.

Since 1976, he headed the Toronto Academy in Canada. In 2000, he returned to Hong Kong to continue his family tradition and began to teach students at the Hong Kong Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan Academy.



MASTER



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I'm 73 years old, and I can still make it hard for a guy like Viktor.

It's not a matter of age. This is a martial arts market fooling people: "Tai Chi Chuan is for retirees only, for health." That is not true. Once you have health, you will have martial arts as well. A very powerful and deadly martial art.

Were you interested or involved in other martial arts? In general, which martial arts do you like?

I am the head of the Wushu Federation of Canada. I respect many martial arts of different styles. I still have so much to learn in Wu Tai Chi Chuan. We communicate with other martial arts masters to develop martial arts together.

Here, look, I'll prove it to you now. This is a photo of my grandfather who was 53 years old and the other man was 30 something. This was a fight in the ring in Macau. There was only the first round, one stroke. Here you see the blood. The organizers were worried and stopped the match. It was a charity match to raise money for the hospital. At first, everyone thought, how is my grandfather going to compete with the young street thug? It was the first open martial arts fight in the world. And my grandfather won. It happened in the 1950s. After that, he, my father, and other members of our family were invited to teach in the Judo Association in Singapore, Japan and many other countries around the world.

Is it true that your father taught Bruce Lee himself?

Bruce Lee's father was an actor in Hong Kong. He was a close friend of my father. Before Bruce Lee went to the United States, his father told him, "Go learn another martial art." (Bruce Lee studied Wing Chun). So he studied Tai Chi Chuan for three months. I will not say for sure, but it seems that he invented his legendary three-inch stroke after learning Tai Chi Chuan. Bruce was very talented and resourceful.

He did a great job of spreading the Eastern martial arts in the Western world.

There is no such style as Kung Fu. "Kung fu" really means "technique." "Your kung fu is very good at driving." "Your kung fu in cooking is just extraordinary." and "Your kung fu is very good at shooting."

Now it's a martial arts brand. However, there is no Hong Kong Kung Fu. Kung Fu is a common name in the field of martial arts.

However, Bruce Lee did a great job of introducing Chinese martial arts to the

Western audience. He was a very, very good guy. He studied a lot. And yes, he studied Tai Chi Chuan under my father.

Each type of martial art has many schools and styles, the same situation is with Tai Chi Chuan. How can such a phenomenon be explained, and how can a person who has a desire to dive into the world of martial arts understand differences within all these branches? What should be the key when making a choice?

It used to be a big problem before.



Finding someone, when you are as a white sheet, you could be painted in any color. If you are lucky, you come across a true, genuine teacher. If not, it may take you ten or twenty years to correct the misconceptions you were taught.

Now the Internet is a big help. You understand where you are. Then it's like a bookstore; we look at different books: "Yes, yes, yes, that makes sense!" And, we buy what we need. So it is with martial arts. Previously, many young people found Tai Chi Chuan too boring. They did hardcore training until the age of forty and then said, "Well, I can't bend anymore."

Now people are searching the Internet. It's so easy to google the person, the story. Then your own IQ should be enough to choose the martial art you like and start training.

Tell us what you want to convey to your students?

If a person is interested in Wu style Tai Chi Chuan – it is my job, it is my duty to teach this person step by step as if opening an onion, layer by layer – to explain that there is no short path, not

to give false hope, to explain that it is a long, difficult path, and to equip with strength and patience.

However, the most important thing I have to say to all the instructors in the world is not to fool people, not to give them futile hopes, not to do it for profit. Many schools often say, "Pay for a year, get a discount, pay for three and get even more." I beg, do not teach for the money. Of course, I'm also not so wealthy as not to take money for training, but to be prudent is my job.

It is my professional duty to lead people the right way, to be honest with them – and then they will come back to you. For example, it often happens that people come with a particular question. After two training sessions, it seems to them that they already know everything, that they are not being shown what they need to solve the issues they have come up with and not enough attention is given to them.

However, if a person has back problems, they will not be able to get into the right position. You need to understand the structure of the body.

Sometimes a person cannot raise his or her hand properly because there is a restraint. After three months or six months, the pain goes away, and everything goes well.

These are the benefits of a healthy approach. If there is health – there will be a martial art. If there is no health – there is no martial art. This is quality training.

I am a representative of the fifth generation Wu Family; the sixth and seventh generation come after me.

I have to do the right thing to teach right.

Now, in times of decline, the decay of traditional martial arts, what advice would you give to their masters to stay popular?

I have to emphasize that the Chinese Wushu has been trying to advance to the Olympic sports for the last ten to fifteen years. Olympic rules are complicated. You see the target below – you hit below, you see it on the top – you have to hit the top. It's like gymnastics. The whole world has to do the same thing, but it won't work. Thus, people lose Wushu as a martial art, it becomes a sport.

To make traditional martial arts styles popular again, people need to spread them, practice accuracy, match the original and not reduce everything to commerce.

Viktor visited Hong Kong twice or thrice, which is where he found what he wanted. He could find training in both Kiev and London – closer to home, and he goes to Hong Kong HQ.

It all depends on how good you are as a teacher. If you are good, then followers will cling to you.

MASTER

Many traditional schools in China and Japan were closed, lost followers, and even died because people simply stopped practicing there. How do you feel about admitting foreigners to such conservative schools?

I totally agree with you. Our older generation kept the school a secret. I make it open as much as possible. Now is 2019, and you need to think in a new way. Previously, students learned one form for three years before moving on to another. This is no longer working.

I teach and develop Tai Chi Chuan of 12 forms, 12 movements. All of these 12 movements contain precision elements.

When students learn these 12 forms and are interested, they will be able to dive deeper into the study of Tai Chi Chuan. However, first of all, I have to keep their interest in learning.

That's how I develop Tai Chi Chuan in the modern world.

Other schools do the same: 20 forms, 22 forms. These are the new realities of learning. You need to open techniques gradually.

Do you use Qigong in your practice?

It is a must in Tai Chi Chuan.

There are six levels. At the first level, the forms are mechanically executed. In the second, the mechanical forms are combined into a single smooth aspect. The third level is the involvement of consciousness in the movement. The fourth level is the filling of movements with power, with internal energy. The fifth level is the use of consciousness in the control of Chi, it is the level of Chi in form. And the last, infinite level, is spiritual. You stand, do nothing, inhale and exhale: all movement takes place on the inside, and externally is inviolability.

Do you know about the yin-yang equilibrium symbol?

Therefore, Qigong is a must.

Look, do you see these? (He moves his hand vigorously but gently). And now? (Sharp motion, stopping his fist).

If we have Qigong – everything is good, when we don't have Qigong – it's the end of us.

When you are weak and you meet a friend, and you are asked, "How are you?" And you sluggishly respond, "We-e-eel..." That's because your Qigong is weak. In contrast: "Well, of course, everything is fine!" It comes out from the inside, powerful.

These are a necessity.

However, in the Western world, Qigong is perceived as something mystical, fabulous.

Qigong is logical.

One day I saw a Tai Chi Chuan teacher. He was sitting and meditating when a disciple approached him. The teacher tells him, "Touch my head! See, it's hot?!" "Of course, it would be hot. "This is Qigong moving up," the teacher replied. This is how Qigong becomes mystified. "Oh, great Qigong!" It's all a hoax.

Martial arts are very logical: $2 + 2 = 4$. Always, and without options.

You just returned from the World Tai Chi Chuan Symposium, held in Italy, where you participated as a Wu-style Gatekeeper. Does this mean that Tai Chi Chuan is becoming more popular? What is its sweetest fruit for you?

This has happened thanks to the Yang family. They are the Gatekeepers of the Yang style Tai Chi Chuan. Their grandfather is 90 something years old. They invited representatives of all other styles to come together: Chen style master, Sun style master and Wu style master to share knowledge. The whole difference between styles practiced by different families is small in forms. However, in general, it is conceptually one martial art.

The event attracted worldwide attention: "Oh, all six families gathered to develop Tai Chi Chuan!" There were more than 300 participants.

I used to do Wu style classes every day. The masters of other families did the same. We held demonstrations, group sessions.

The event was attended by doctors, and we discussed how Tai Chi Chuan can help alleviate mental illness for those suffering from Parkinson's disease. In Hong Kong, I created Tai Chi Chuan forms for wheelchair-bound people with disabilities. So are other families who share and broaden their knowledge.

Yes, I think that after the seminar, Tai Chi Chuan will become a lot more compelling for people who want to master it.

Here is an example. Tai Chi means nothing. Tai Chi Chuan has meaning. "Chuan" means "this, a certain form." Tai Chi is a combination of yin and yang in Taoist philosophy. It's a religion. We do not practice religion.

The founder of Tai Chi Chuan is a Taoist monk Zhang Sanfeng. One day he saw the battle of two animals – a crane and a snake. Seeing the movements of these animals, he reproduced them as Tai Chi Chuan.

So, you need to master only 37 movements, and this is already a martial art based on the teachings of Taoism, the concept of which is that "the power of four ounces deflects the force of a thousand pounds." Don't move, move, move faster. This is a Taoist philosophy, not a religion.

Tai Chi Chuan has a long history, but we are trying to make it more scientific, more practical. For example, the practice of balance helps to avoid falling on the snowy streets. And in Singapore? There is no snow. In Singapore, there are banana peels, orange peels, which you can also slip on.

Tai Chi Chuan teaches balance, something that we call "quality of life". It is not only resistance to common falls, but also achieving balance in all areas, which is the key to a healthier, better, quality life. It's not magic. We need to work on this. If the body is flexible, so is the mind.

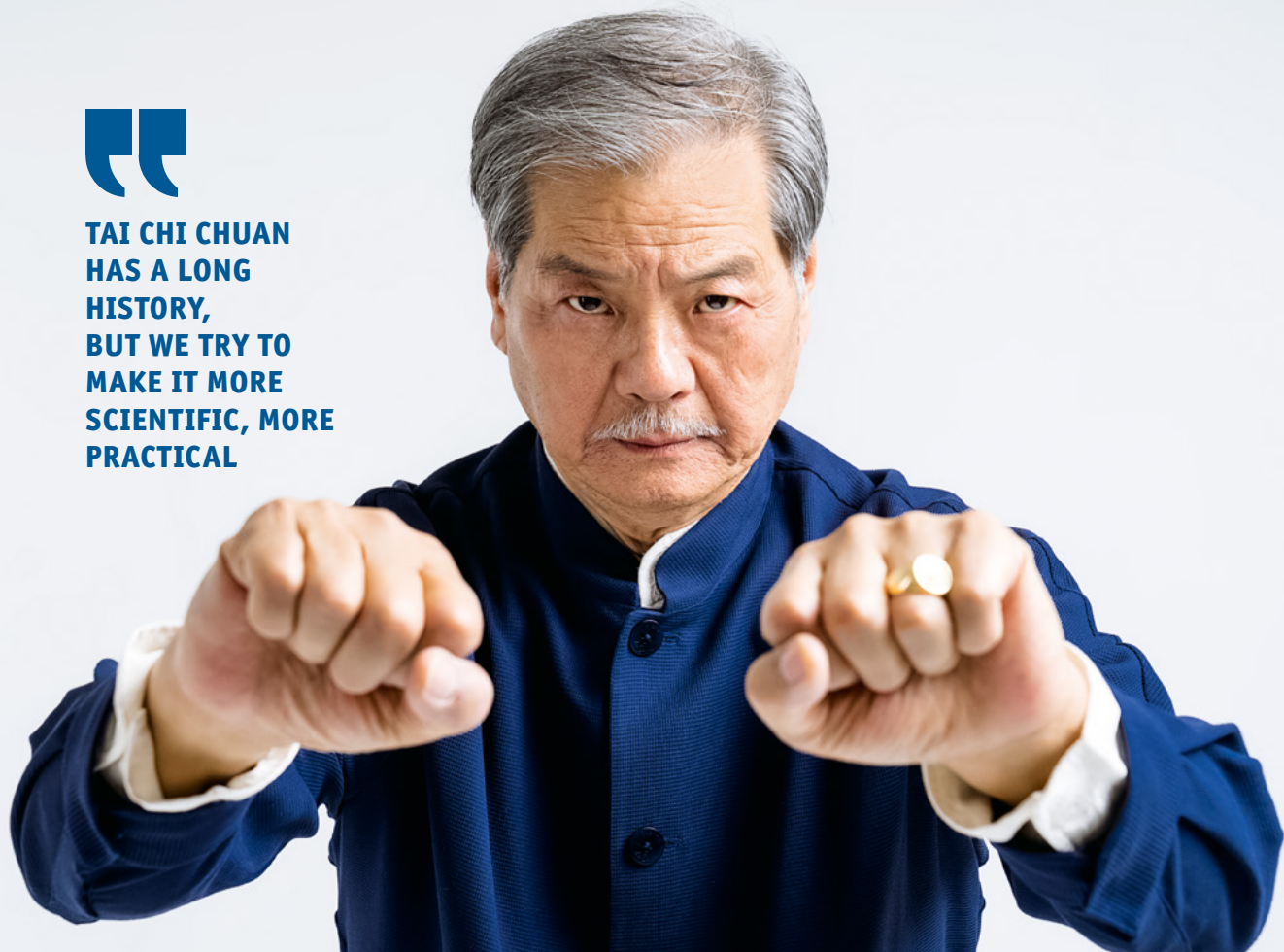
That is why the western world calls Tai Chi Chuan "meditation in motion" – when the body and consciousness are in harmony.

In Canada, we conducted research on the nervous and mental activity of people practicing Tai Chi Chuan. The Western people do not believe the words, they believe only the results of research. So, we analyzed more than thirty volunteers in a hospital who practiced Tai Chi Chuan for three months, and more than thirty percent of them improved their physical and mental equilibrium. This is a scientific approach to the study of Tai Chi Chuan.

Here's another answer to your question about how to handle such a variety of martial arts and Tai Chi Chuan styles. In Canada, many people live in the suburbs and work in the center. And so they look for classes as close to home as possible – 5 minutes drive, no more. For them, the main thing is convenience, not quality. And that's the problem. It all depends on the student – how serious his intentions are. Viktor is serious. He has been practicing various techniques for a long time, but as soon as we spoke with him on the phone and I answered two of his questions, he immediately



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flew to me in Hong Kong. Until I have an understanding of what is good and what is bad, I should only rely on luck with the choice of teacher. It's much easier now: we have the Internet, Google, YouTube.

Is the approach in techniques and understanding of Tai Chi Chuan of non-Chinese masters different?

Not every Chinese can cook Chinese food, and not every Chinese knows how to teach Tai Chi Chuan. If you find a teacher with an oriental face who teaches good Tai Chi Chuan, you are in luck. However, it is more difficult for Western people – they have to prove that they know Tai Chi Chuan well because they are not Chinese. They need to prove it to the public. I don't have to do that.

Another issue is language. If I did not speak the language and Viktor did not speak English well, it would be very difficult for us to communicate. This is the intellectual part. Therefore, I am trying to expand the languages that these 12 forms are taught in: Spanish,

French, Italian, Ukrainian, Chinese. If you do not know the language, all you have to do is to imitate. Unfortunately, Tai Chi Chuan is not as simple as "one", "two", "three" – many theories have to be explained, the forms have to be taught, and one needs to know how to make them more perfect.

Therefore, the teacher's personality and language skills are important.

We are open, I have students all over the world. If I wanted to teach only Chinese – I would have stayed where I was born. That was the reason why I went to the West.

What is your opinion on the Training Center in Ukraine? How well do the educational process and results meet the standards of your family style? What would you like to wish Viktor on his Tai Chi Chuan journey?

Of course, Viktor has a lot to develop. I am also constantly learning. Nobody is perfect. I have been training since 6 years old and have more tai chi

chuan training than Viktor. However, I am really impressed with his success. During the year, the students of the Training Center studied 108 forms at a good level – it is impressive! Yesterday I saw him practicing as a teacher. My students have seen this before. "He does everything at a very good level, Sifu," they said. "Really good? In a year?" I thought. However, when I saw it – it was really good, not perfect, of course, but to master the basic level of all forms in a year of training is very impressive.

It is important not only that he develops himself, but also that his group develops with him. He is really the only true follower of Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan in Ukraine.

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