

Tai Chi Chuan

as the Masters-of-the-next-level see it

The way of thought

for aspirants

Shifu Damir Tenodi



Shifu Damir Tenodi is a teacher of martial and therapeutic arts and the author of four books published on the subject.

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Master Ananda

The Master-of-the-next-level, Master Ananda, is a mystic, who opts for anonymity.

Working with a core group of aspirant-participants, Master Ananda provides teaching, writings and discourses on mysticism—as a method of attaining self-knowledge by recognising the impulse from the soul, and fostering that line of communication.

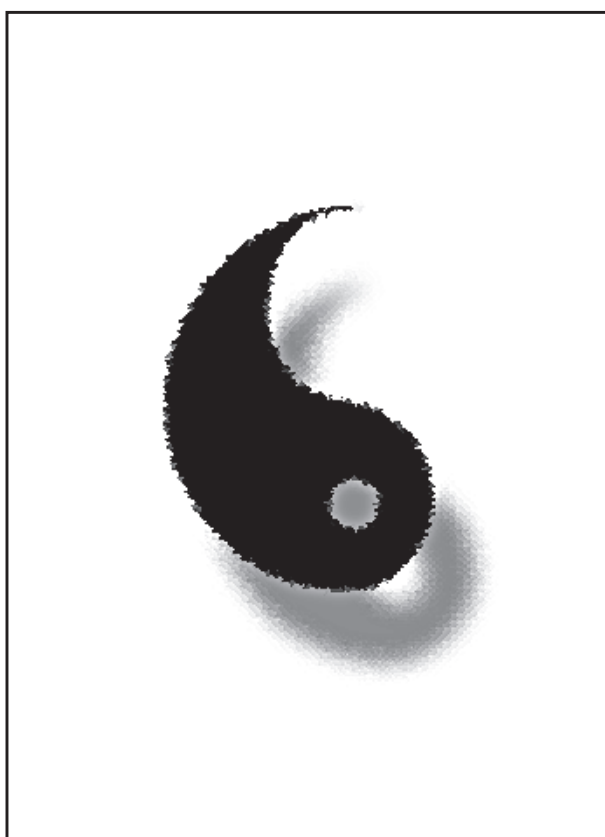
For the mystic, it is an imperative to cultivate the mind and nurture the intellect, even more so than it is for those who believe intellect to be an end in itself. The mystic's priority is the Experience; Experience being the experience of the soul, which becomes accessible through the rational mind, thus illuminating daily life.

In Master Ananda's teaching, through the central idea of the Endeavour, defined as a multiple, three-directional effort for Self, Society and the Source, we find instructions and guidelines for modern-day mystics, or aspirants, in their sustained effort towards Self-development.

Shifu Damir Tenodi

DESPERATELY SEEKING YIN

exploring the neglected dimensions of modern tai chi chuan



with commentaries by Master Ananda

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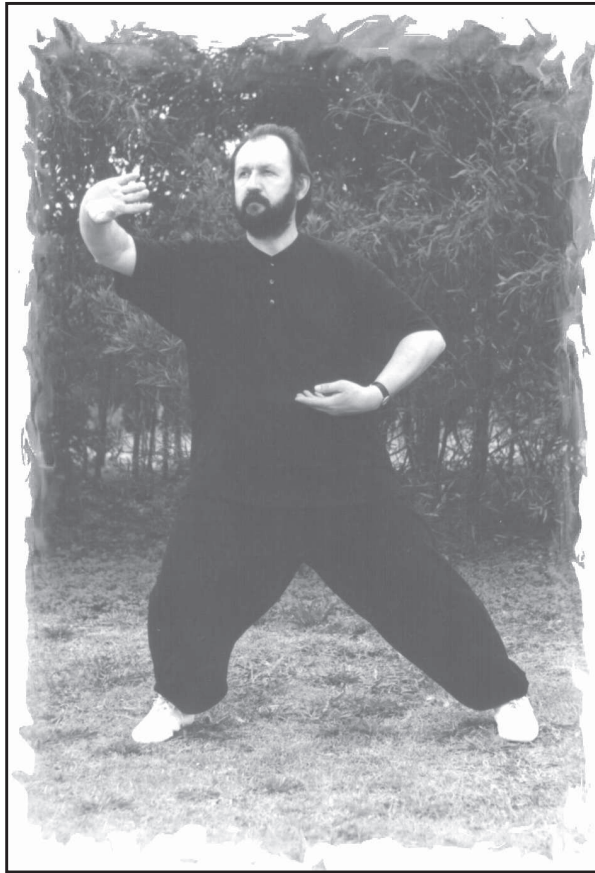
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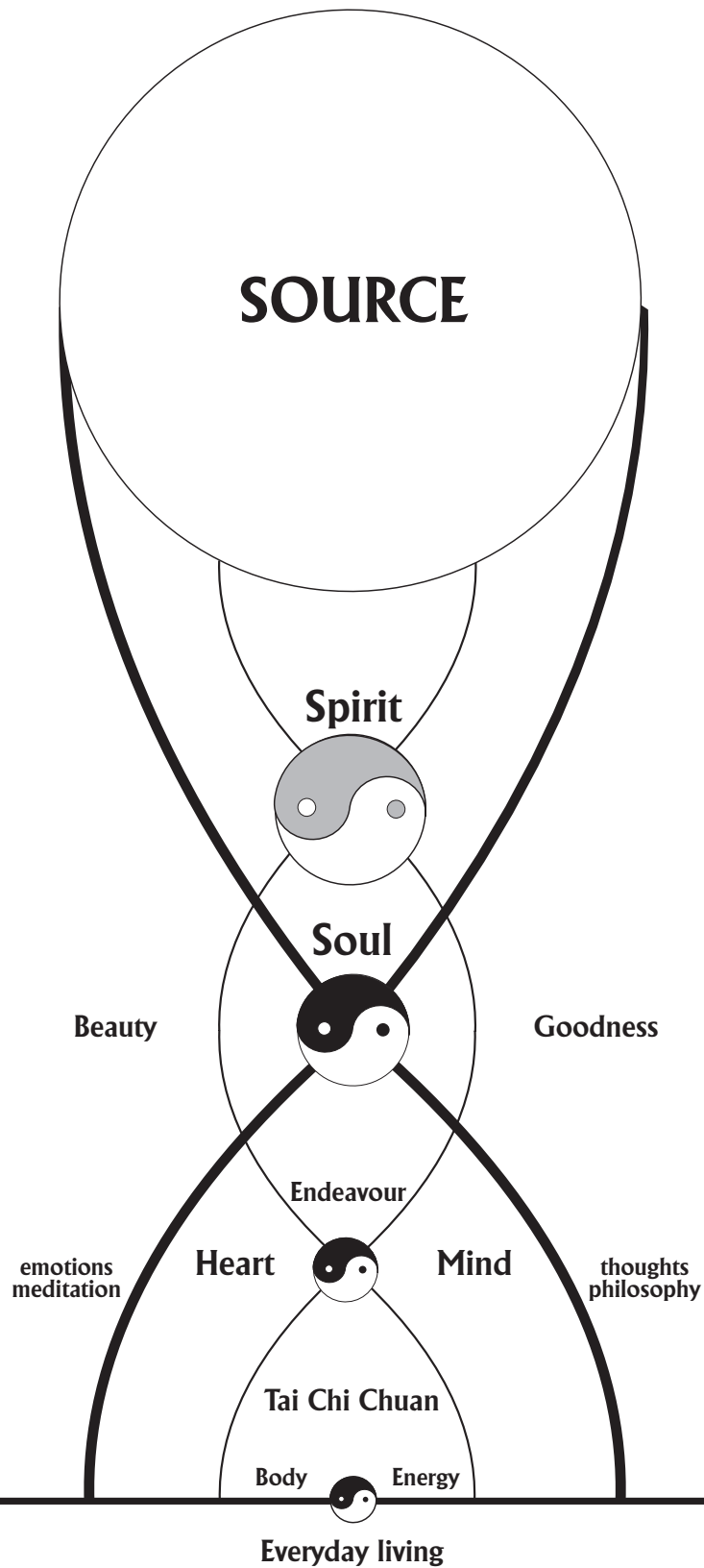
In Anan-Do integral tai chi chuan and chi kung teaching, there are no grades, belts or titles, other than the minimum required to establish a basic structure. Although the Masters-of-the-next-level do have more elaborate gradation (grouping people as potential aspirants, aspirant-trainees, aspirant-beginners, and aspirant-participants), they see people generally as either beginners or aspirants.

The beginner group includes true beginners, skillwise. But it can also include advanced students, black belts, masters, grandmasters, even keepers of the styles—all those who keep perfecting a single aspect of their work or life, who have not (or not yet) chosen to work towards completion, through complementary methods.

An aspirant can evolve out of a beginner of any of these kinds. Aspirants are those who, having sensed the impulse from the soul, have chosen to strive for completion and started working towards attaining wholeness.

The term 'master' is commonly written with a capital M, but in this book, I use lower case (with no disrespect intended) for masters of all the types and degrees we come across, reserving the capital M solely for Masters-of-the-next-level, such as Master Ananda and Master Ido.

Greater and Lesser Hourglass



INTRODUCTION

My name is Damir. It is pronounced 'Dah-meer'.

I moved to Sydney from Zagreb, Croatia, in 1983.

In Zagreb, apart from my regular job as a civil engineer, I ran a karate club. After more than ten years teaching hard style martial arts, I became increasingly aware of its limitations and drawbacks, and decided to complement my routine with softer methods, internal martial arts such as tai chi chuan and chi kung. I became familiar with both, thanks to several Chinese teachers. In 1980 I started practising Yang style tai chi chuan with Tsao Detsong, a medical practitioner who spent several years in Zagreb, on doctors' exchange, teaching Croatian doctors acupuncture.

Over the following three years, Tsao helped me learn and refine the Yang form. But more than being a good teacher, he was an exemplary human being. Not in-your-face impressive, but in his own subtle and unassuming way—modest, gentle, patient and highly ethical.

When I arrived in Sydney, back in 1983, it took me a while to get orientated. Soft styles were just becoming popular, and I explored the available options. Coincidentally, that same year master Chen Yongfa arrived in Sydney, and in 1984 I started training under his tutelage, becoming an active teacher of chi kung in the late 80s.

In 1991, another excellent master moved to Sydney, Chen Xiaowang, the keeper of Chen style tai chi chuan. I have been training with him ever since. Luckily for me, over the following seven years he was in Sydney most of the time, so I had the opportunity to train with him on a weekly basis. These days, he is globetrotting, teaching all over the world, but I still catch up with him a couple of times a year, when he returns to Sydney between overseas commitments.

Even though I've been teaching tai chi chuan and chi kung for so many years, I still take the opportunity to practise with particular teachers, including Yang style and Hsing I masters. Each of them has provided me with a valuable component to integrate into my art.

MASTER ANANDA'S THEORY OF ENDEAVOUR

The crucial moment that clearly defined my personal direction occurred in 1987, when I was invited to work under the guidance of a Master-of-the-next-level, Master Ananda.

The downside was that, by agreeing, I was sworn to secrecy, bound by a vow of silence as far as certain areas of the proposed work were concerned. I was to publish some of the Master's materials, dialogues and discourses, but was not to release any information about him, other than that he is a mystic, who has opted for anonymity.

This has caused me a lot of grief, for several reasons.

Firstly, I was so proud, or honoured would be a better word, that I would have liked nothing more than to 'show him off'. I guess that in itself was a lesson for me.

Secondly, this attracted questions I couldn't answer. I was surprised that even the most earnest seekers—a number of whom claimed to have been taught by gurus, adepts and the like, or even pretended to be spiritual teachers themselves—didn't seem to understand the first thing about such teaching. When their questions remained unanswered, they'd get annoyed, resorting to provocation, insults and ridicule. I guess that was another lesson for me, to see how even the best of people can succumb to conceit, believing nothing should remain hidden from them. They claim there should be no secrets. Anyone who makes such a claim has obviously never received tuition on a higher level—just as people who have never experienced love are quick to claim there is no such thing as love, it's a figment of the imagination. I found that upsetting, but Master Ananda dismissed it as just another indicative sign of our times, when in spite of all the show of adoration and displays of feigned devotion, no-one shows, or feels for that matter, much true respect for anything.

But that was the least of my worries.

Over the first several years, the focus of our work was on destabilising all I thought was firm. My established patterns of living and modes of thinking were mercilessly scrutinised, their shortcomings harshly pointed out, and knocked down. The carpet of certainty was pulled from under my feet. That was a difficult time for me, as the established structure was dismantled, and I found myself in a sort of vacuum before the new pattern started taking shape. The constant that carried me through those times was not skill, or knowledge, but unwavering trust.

By now, the new pattern is clear and a part of it is Master Ananda's Theory of Endeavour. That's why I call Master Ananda the Master of Endeavour. The theory finds expression and support through the forms I teach. Master Ananda calls me a participant. He has never called me a student or a disciple, but a participant. Which is, I suspect, his gentle way of making me feel important, as if my contribution is an essential part of his work.

WHAT DID THE ORIGINATORS HAVE IN MIND?

When we, martial art practitioners, embrace any chosen style, belonging to either hard or soft schools, most of us are attracted not solely by its fighting power, but by its associated benefits: the value of discipline, character-building, team-work, fitness, strength, or—in the case of the soft schools—the healing properties, the therapeutic value.

However, I'd like to believe that most of us also grow passionate about the higher value-system embedded in martial arts, its ethics and spiritual implications; we want our chosen art to turn us not into killing machines, able to strike a mortal blow at any given moment, but into better people, leading a more meaningful existence.

And, for a while, it all works well. We progress step by step, degree by degree, belt after belt, gaining expertise and recognition for our excellence.

But then there comes a time when we are no longer satisfied with that. With foundations firmly established, we want to reach further, beyond the skill. We look for superstructure, set about discovering the spiritual aspects of the given art, and pay more attention to the underlying philosophy, the tenets established by the Originators.

Today, the common way of teaching in most of the popular schools simply fails to provide any such superstructure. Although it's written into every school's code, there seems to be a kind of a glass-ceiling, an invisible barrier, so that practitioners, no matter how dedicated, reach a point zero where no further breakthrough is possible. Refining the skill, yes; we can go on and on, indefinitely; but there is no apparent advance in the sense of well-rounded personal growth.

Master Ananda states that people tend to embrace things too eagerly, in any area of life, and then, by sheer force of momentum, don't know when to stop, how to slow down and introduce a new, enriching component into their horizontal progress. And the pity is that most leading world authorities just seem to reinforce this linear approach. As you'll see from the statements of high-profile exponents of various styles that you'll come across if you flick through any martial arts magazine. In their forties and fifties and sixties, with decades of hard work behind them, they just keep doing the same old thing, with the same approach as when they started. This is when their recitation of the noble truths and the Originators' precepts starts sounding trite and hollow.

Why does it happen? Where do we go wrong? What is missing? Are we not dedicated enough, strong enough, smart enough? Why does the goal keep fading into the distance, slipping away every time we see it within our grasp?

If the goal is to achieve inner peace, we need to define methods. And in defining the Endeavour, the balanced three-fold effort, Master Ananda has repeatedly pointed out to me the **imperative of stillness**. The need for moments of silence and solitude—the two very things that are completely missing from our lives.

There is another fundamental tenet in the theory of Endeavour. The existence of the soul.

DO WE HAVE A SOUL?

We cannot persuade or convince anyone that the soul exists. We either feel it or we don't. Initially, it is purely a matter of faith, something that cannot be learnt. Master Ananda says the Masters-of-the-next-level can help only *after* one senses an impulse from the soul. This moment of receiving an impulse from the soul turns an ordinary person into a potential aspirant. A potential aspirant no longer feels attracted to a single, linear effort, but yearns for completion, opting for the Endeavour, striving to become an aspirant-trainee.

This decision causes anxiety, as the former anchors are no longer valid. As we decide to let go of our cocoon of apparent security—be it skill-excellence, a career choice, a family set-up—we can be torn by a sense of disloyalty, uncertainty, of being on a precipice where we fear that if we leap—we'll fall. A potential aspirant, if he decides to say No! to fear, can start working on both the material and the spiritual aspect. In a physical sense, he strives for a better quality life, and in the metaphysical sense, he works towards completion.

COMPLETION IS ACHIEVED THROUGH SHIFTS IN CONSCIOUSNESS

This doesn't tell us much at this point, does it? Perhaps you see completion as the acquisition of all the required components, much as in learning the form and its movements. You believe that if you have all the ingredients, the whole will automatically emerge. Or perhaps you think of it as a straightforward balance of opposites. Let's leave that for a moment, and we'll look at it more closely when we examine the diagram of the Endeavour.

Shifts in consciousness are achieved through multiple effort and through learning about the nature of the soul.

Master Ananda defines a meaningful life as *living in accordance with the nature of one's soul*. It is achieved when one, through a multiple effort, successfully establishes a two-way, ongoing contact with the soul, and starts learning about its nature.

But unless there is a mind trained in both of its aspects—an intellect polished by thinking, and an intuition refined through meditation—the soul is bound to remain mute.

WHY DOES THE SOUL NEED THE MIND?

Master Ananda says: What is the point of contacting the soul if it remains mute? What if the soul is imprisoned in some moron who, with a saintly smile, keeps receiving impulses from the soul, but remains passive, does nothing to *cultivate* the communication? Who just walks about with a blissful grin, or, on the other hand, morosely pontificating, boring everyone with ill-conceived notions of higher consciousness, deep mind and spiritual self, refusing to provide the essential instrument for the soul?

Nothing of higher value can be communicated while one remains unskilled, unable to articulate the impulses. Until one engages the mind and trains it as the most important ally. This is when an aspirant ceases to be *a creature on earth and becomes a soul in the world*.

I ACKNOWLEDGE...

I acknowledge the remarkable skill and technical expertise of a number of good teachers who have taught me a range of skills. Thanks to them, since 1965 I've been able to learn and teach a number of styles and forms, steadily refining my martial and therapeutic art. I also recognise the technical expertise of many good teachers all over the world.

But I have to stress that their tutelage, and the accumulated knowledge they are passing on, all pertain exclusively to the lower pyramid of our human Hourglass and are contained in the lower circle of integrated teaching.

Today's teachers of skill cite, quote and reiterate the precepts and principles of their particular chosen art, but there is no deeper understanding among them of the true philosophy of art and its relation to modern life.

Master Ananda states that, for a complete life, there is nothing more important than education. Once acquired, it has to be handled properly; it has to then be turned into understanding. The mere accumulation of knowledge in itself does not lead to wisdom, but it is an essential prerequisite, as it provides a content to be structured, a foundation for a Master-of-the-next-level to work upon. Lack of education obstructs the Masters' work. Likewise, the solely devotional approach—a yearning for the Ultimate unsupported by a concrete effort, a full concentration on the upper pyramid—also frustrates their work towards the Endeavour.

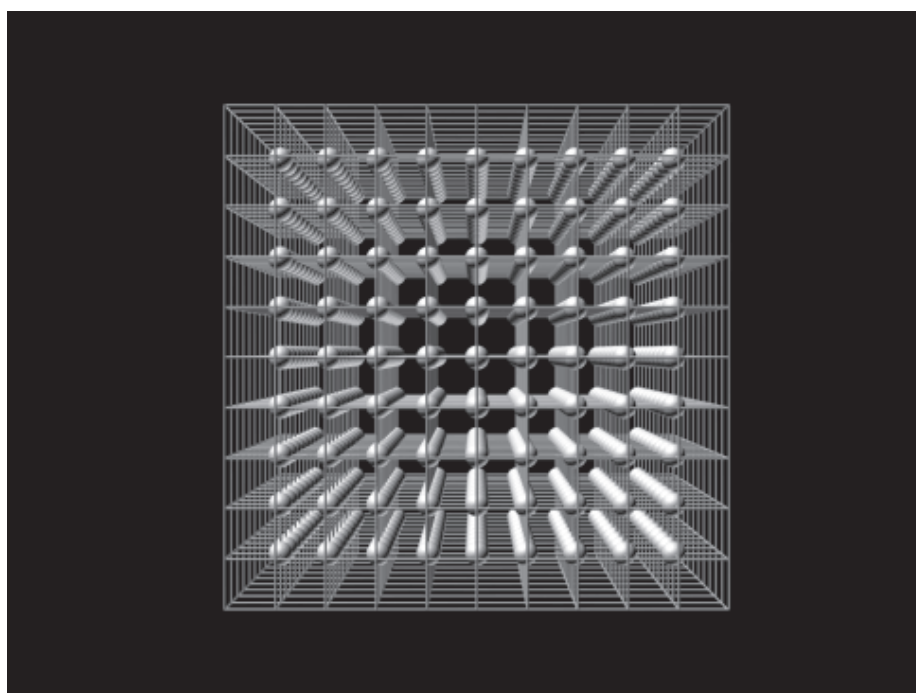
To me, the deeper significance of our actions, the higher goals of our practice, the very purpose of a human life, and the true meaning of tai chi chuan had been slowly emerging, gaining in clarity, but my knowledge started turning into true understanding only thanks to the guidance of Master Ananda.

What I learnt from the masters of skill, combined with my own experience in teaching, is included in the beginners' part of this book. But the theories and precepts, especially those expounded in this part, are drawn wholly from Master Ananda's teachings and are the result of my work in conjunction with the philosophy of this Master of Ideational Integration.

I cannot tell you who the Masters-of-the-next-level, these superb Ideational Adjustors, actually are. I can only tell you that they are very real. And I can tell you that you *can* attract their attention. Once your skill is moderately good, your healthy thirst for knowledge moderately stimulated, your concentration and meditation skills moderately developed, your motive right and your purpose clear, your multiple effort established, they'll find you. *Don't call us, we'll call you* is their motto, so to speak.

There is no access to them except through the Endeavour, a threefold effort shaped by the right intention. There is no application form to be filled out, no organisation to be joined, no membership in their school. No rules to be followed other than those stemming from self-responsibility. Self in the sense of the Intended Me.

Once your desire to act in accordance with your Intended Me starts overriding your dependence on the Conditioned Me, your inner realms will start pulsating on a higher octave, and a Master-of-the-next-level will find you.



WHO IS WHO

MASTER ANANDA, SHIFU DAMIR TENODI
AND THE MASTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN MARTIAL & THERAPEUTIC ARTS

Shifu Damir Tenodi refines his skill in tai chi chuan and chi kung with the best masters of martial and therapeutic arts, and receives tuition in the esoteric philosophy of Tai Chi from Masters-of-the-next-level, with Master Ananda as his main guide and teacher.

Through the Anan-Do method of teaching,
Shifu Damir Tenodi provides aspects of training
as learnt directly from these teachers:

Masters-of-the-next-level; Masters of Tai Chi; Masters of Ideational Integration

Master Ananda

Custodian of esoteric philosophy; Master of the Endeavour; the Founder of Anan-Do



masters of skill, masters of tai chi chuan

Sifu Chen Xiaowang

Keeper of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan

masters of therapeutics, masters of chi kung

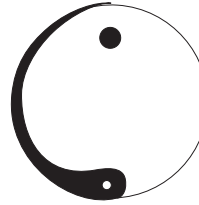
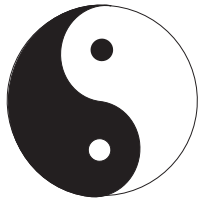
Sifu Dr. Chen Yongfa

Keeper of Choy Lee Fut Kung Fu

Why Anan-Do?

Original Tai Chi vs modern-day Tai Chi

- in tai chi chuan form and in life -



The tai chi chuan Classics say: "Clearly distinguish between Yin and Yang in order to accomplish Tai Chi";

by accomplishing Tai Chi, we can hope for

Wholeness,

which results in

total health and

true well-being,

something that we are all seeking...

Why does modern-day tai chi chuan fail to fulfill this purpose?

Chips without fish

Due to ignorance—our reasoning fails us and our search remains futile. We are unable to clearly distinguish Yin from Yang, and, consequently, are incapable of appropriately matching and balancing things and activities in life.

Instead of harmonising opposites, what we 'harmonise' is sameness; we combine chips (Yang) with mashed potato, assuming it's fish (Yin).

Naturally, we just end up with a huge pile of potatoes—pure Yang, spread all over the plate.

Likewise, in life matters, we keep mixing Yang-stuff with Yang-stuff and such a predominantly Yang 'diet' leads us straight into:

anxiety,

stress,

depression,

and deep unhappiness,

which is something

quite contrary to what we are looking for.

We've forgotten that too much Yang suffocates Yin, just as too much Yin would dissolve Yang. Tai chi chuan, in its original intention, was meant to provide us with a means for discerning true Yin from true Yang—a pattern to be applied beyond the form, so that our life would become truly balanced and wholesome.

The urgency of a complete, life-relevant tai chi chuan and Master Ananda's response

**By definition,
by intention, and
by its inherent potential**

**tai chi chuan was conceived of as a complete method, comprising three distinct disciplines
which, in combination, were meant to provide a rendering engine for a meaningful life**

Philosophy

Martial Art



Chi Kung

**In modern-day tai chi chuan, its most important aspect—philosophy—is increasingly
ignored, misrepresented
and even despised,
turning tai chi chuan into a set of physical exercises
that can no longer serve as an enabling discipline**

**By reintroducing this forgotten aspect
—spiritual philosophy and the ideational adjustment,
mental training and thought restructuring that go with it—
we can revive tai chi chuan
so it can, again, serve its original purpose**

**Seeing the need for people's fragmented lives to be reintegrated through these
once noble disciplines,
Master Ananda has responded with Anan-Do teaching.**

Anan-Do teaching method

**as envisioned by the Master-of-the-next-level, Master Ananda,
consists of three main aspects
—martial art, therapeutic discipline and esoteric philosophy—
just as in original tai chi chuan.**

Three aspects of Anan-Do teaching esoteric philosophy



skill & martial arts

therapeutics & energetics

A WAY IN THE MAZE

In this book I wish to clarify the intended meaning of tai chi chuan practice and the true objectives of this art.

The ideas expounded here might help senior students, instructors, masters and grandmasters who are interested in completion and in helping practitioners to integrate practice with their lives.

Today, the market is so glutted with inferior material that true meaning has been obliterated under its weight, smothered by the rubbish provided in the name of popularising tai chi chuan. Unfortunately, this art has been misunderstood by the mentally and spiritually immature. Once the art left the monasteries, it started steadily deteriorating, and today is used predominantly as a health exercise, although we also see quite a number of deluded practitioners who interpret it as a way to enlightenment.

The other day, I read this ad:

We take into account your unique essence, destiny, purpose and karmic lessons. We help you create unprecedented transformation and healing. You'll unlock your personal destiny and life's purpose, heal and re-connect to the divine, discover who you are and enjoy life to the full.

What are they promoting, I wondered. Some life-transforming opportunity, a visit by the Dalai Lama, a talk on Madame Blavatsky's *Cosmogenesis*, videotapes of Krishnamurti?

At the end, the ad tells us they sell essential oils!

This perfectly illustrates what we are flooded with today. In this farcical new-age babbling, any serious attempt at conveying ideas of true value has got lost. With words overused, exhausted and empty, no wonder the true Masters have had to create a new terminology.

Our pet misconceptions are not helping at all. People's expectations of what a spiritual teacher is couldn't be more wrong. The Masters are imagined to be blissful, benevolent beings generously dispensing wisdom. They are far from that and can, in their own words, become impatient and frustrated, when their work seems to be hindered by fools. Why? Master Ananda explains it like this:

A worthy idea is always conceived in a noble mind, inspired by a noble soul, but its implementation and translation into the material realm depends on lesser beings; at times, its conversion into practice is carried out by those who lack understanding of the basic precepts of the idea, as well as its wider context.

This explains why we often feel as if great teachings have no real impact on human life, and the great religions are failing to bring us peace or relieve suffering in the world. We see good people becoming disheartened, giving up, concluding that all efforts are useless, and that life is nothing but futile toil.

I disagree. There is always hope. If not for this hope, no Master-of-the-next-level would find it necessary to help us. And still, they do. Not out of choice, as they say, but as a task. They fail, and they try again.