

THE YANG FAMILY'S “FORTY VERSES”

*as recorded in the Tai Ji Quan Shi Yi
by Master Tung Yingchieh, 1948*

Verses 1-12

Eight Gates and Five Steps

八門五步

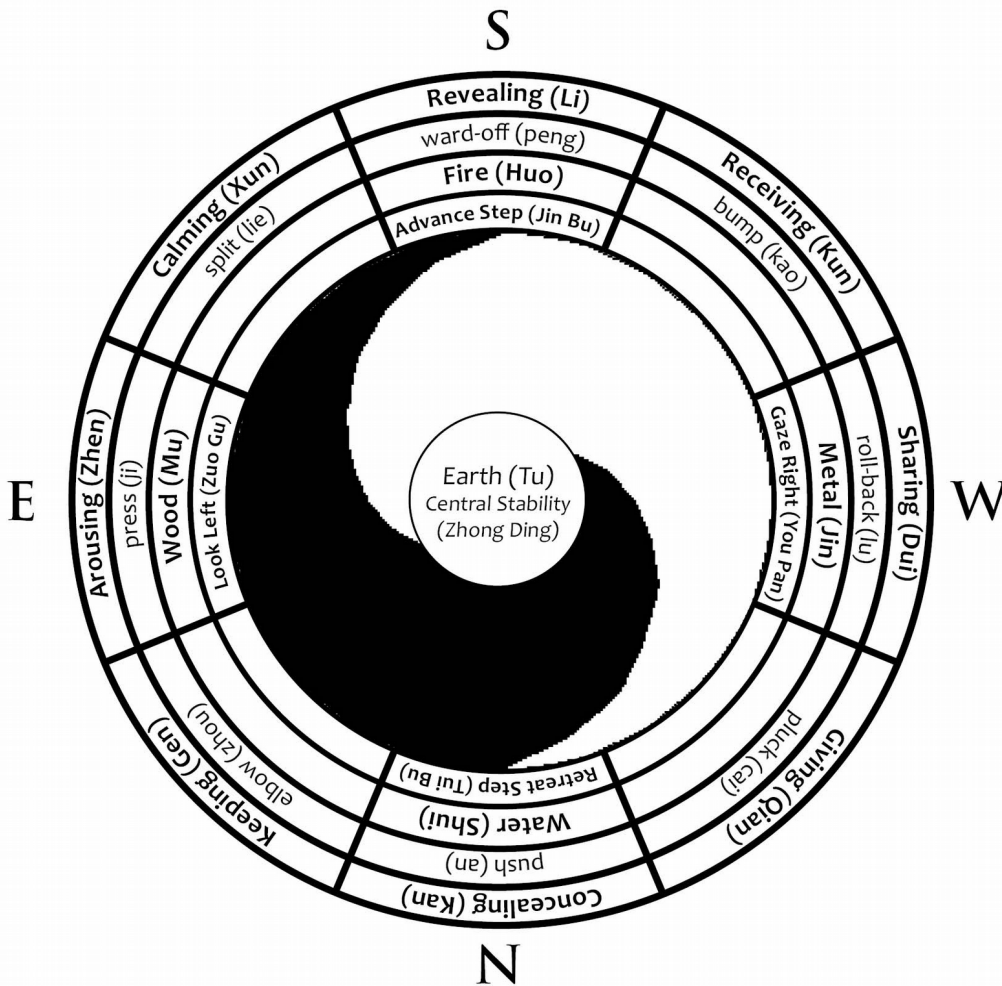
Bā Mén Wǔ Bù

The “eight gates” are the eight degrees of the square. They come from the principle of yin and yang constantly compounding. They circle all the way around back to where they started. They are continuously following that which moves. All in all there are “four straights” and “four corners.” This is not something that can be ignored.

Wardoff, rollback, press and push are the four straights of the hands. While pluck, split, elbow and bump are the four corners of the hands. Join together the corners and straights of the hand and find one’s bearings amidst the many gates and their possibilities.

In a similar way the steps are differentiated through the body. The “five movements” stem from one’s intentions and provide the structural substance of the “eight expressions.” The five movements are the advancing of fire, the retreating of water, the looking-left of wood, the glancing-right of metal and the being-firmly-fixed-in-the-center-of-the-square of earth. Thus advance and retreat are the water and fire of the steps, looking and glancing are the metal and wood of the steps, and the reckoning of the pivot on it’s axis is the central ground.

The “eight patterns (bagua)” are preserved in the chest and the “five phases (wuxing)” are tread by the legs. Hands and feet together, eight and five – it all add up to thirteen. Coming about all by themselves they are the “thirteen postures.” Otherwise known as the “eight gates and five steps.”



Method for Building the Gong of the Eight Gates and Five Steps

八門五步用功法

Bā Mén Wǔ Bù Yòng Gōng Fǎ

The “eight patterns and five phases” are the complete expression of the innate goodness of human life. This is why it is imperative above all else to be absolutely clear in regards to knowing, feeling, turning and moving. These four words get at the very root: “know, feel, turn and move.” To become aware of conscious motion is to gradually acquire the power of understanding. Through this power of understanding it is natural to be able to connect and extend to spiritual clarity. This is why in order to build the “gong of eight and five” it is absolutely essential to make knowing, feeling, turning and moving the first priority. It is very difficult to establish this innate goodness. Indeed, it is difficult for me as well.

Method For Distinguishing Innate Clarity

固有分明法

Gù Yǒu Fēn Míng Fǎ

So it is that mankind comes into this life from the very beginning with eyes that are able to see, ears that are able to hear, a nose that is able to smell and a mouth that is able to taste. All the colors and hues, the sounds and tones, the aromas and scents, the five flavors – all are present inherently. The whole world is like this, knowing and feeling from the start, sure and good. The hands can pose and the feet can dance. Combined together the four limbs are able. The whole world is like this, turning and moving from the start, sure and good.

Think about this for a minute. Could mankind exist without purpose? In nature people are closely related, yet in practice so far apart. Lost and led astray from what was originally there, one must purposefully return oneself to that which is firmly established innately within.

There can be no martial if not through seeking the root cause of turning and moving. There can be no civil if not through acquiring the primary source of knowing and feeling. Thus, turning and moving go along with knowing and feeling – turning while knowing, moving while feeling. If no turning, then no knowing. If no moving, then no feeling. When turning is absolute then movement will come. When feeling is full then knowing will come. Moving and knowing are what is easy. Turning and feeling are what is difficult.

First seek in oneself the knowing, feeling, turning and moving. Obtain this from one's own body directly and naturally in time one will be able to know others as well. It is important when studying others to beware of losing oneself. This is not a principle that can be ignored. From here, the power of understanding is close behind.

Attaching, Continuing, Being Attached and Following

粘連黏隨

Zhān Lián Nián Suí

Attaching means lifting up what is worthy.

Being attached means retaining affection and treasuring the bond.

Continuing means residing in the self without ever separating from it.

Following means that which moves and this that responds.

We can only know others through knowing, feeling, turning and moving.

Without being clear on attaching, being attached, continuing and following it cannot be done.

Like this, attaching, being attached, continuing and following are the skills to seek.

It is extremely important to be careful with the details.

Going Against, Leaving, Flatness and Resisting

頂丟扁抗

Dǐng Dīu Biǎn Kàng

Going against means doing too much.

Flatness means not doing enough.

Leaving means disconnecting.

Resisting means taking too long.

It must be known that these are the four things that lead to problems.
If one is unclear in attaching, being attached, continuing and following
it is because one is unclear in knowing, feeling, turning and moving.
Once one starts to study the hands of the opponent one cannot be unaware.
One must not neglect to avoid these problems.
What is difficult is attaching, being attached, continuing and following
while at the same time not allowing oneself to go against, flatten, leave or resist.
There is nothing about this that is easy.

Properly Regarding Being Without Problems

對待無病

Duì Dài Wú Bìng

If there is any going against, flatness, leaving or resisting then the proper way of reacting to situations will have been lost. This is what is called a problem. Failing to attach, be attached, continue and follow then how could one possibly be aware of conscious motion? Failing to be aware of one's own self then how could one ever hope to gain awareness of others? Therefore, what is called “properly dealing with things” when facing an opponent means never going against, being flat, losing or resisting. At the same time one must also be sure to attach, be attached, continue and follow as well. Be capable as is and not only in regard to being without disease. Awareness of conscious motion comes about naturally of its own accord. This is the way to advance towards the skill of understanding energy.

Regarding the Skill and Method of Protecting Central Ground

對待用功法守中土

Duì Dài Yòng Gōng Fǎ Shǒu Zhōng Tǔ

俗名站樁

su míng zhan chuang

commonly known as “Standing Pole” or “Pile Stance”

Settle into the center of the square and find the root in the feet.
First make clear the four straights and the advance and retreat of the body.
Ward-off, rollback, press, and push are the four techniques of the self.
It takes considerable effort to attain to the reality of this gongfu.
Keep the structural integrity of the waist and the crown consistently maintained,
Through attaching, being attached, continuing and following intention and energy are united.
Turning, moving, knowing and feeling mutually arrive and respond to each other.
Spirit is in the ruling position. The bones and muscles are the subjects.
Clearly differentiate the seventy-two firing times,
and naturally, wherever there is martial there also will be civil.

The Structural Integrity of the Waist and the Crown

身形腰頂

Shēn Xíng Yāo Dǐng

How could anything be possible without the structural integrity of the waist and crown?
Lacking such a unity, why even bother spending your hard-earned energy?
The more exhaustively you focus on the waist and crown, the more enduring your growth and vitality.
This structural integrity is what allows you to satisfy the full expression of the self.
If you abandon the truth of this principle then what pivot are we even talking about here?
After ten years of plying the art you will still feel muddled and confused.

Tai Ji Circle

太極圈

Tài Jí Quān

Retreating out of the circle is easy.
It's advancing into the circle that's difficult.
Be careful not to part the waist from the crown.
Keep what follows together with what precedes.
The central ground is very difficult to maintain,
but it is imperative not to part from it.

It is easy to retreat and difficult to advance.
Carefully consider the subtlety of this.
Clearly it refers to being in motion
and not to holding a fixed stance.

It means every time with the body,
whether advancing or retreating,
the shoulders should remain even.
Persevere like water:
both slowly wearing away
and suddenly bursting through.

The images of the Cloud Dragon and the Wind Tiger
surround and encircle with their revolutions.
It is essential to utilize the “Matrix of the Sky”
in order to get to the bottom of this,
and eventually, through the long course of time,
one will freely rise up into the sky oneself.

The Taiji Gong of Advancing and Retreating Ceaselessly

太極進退不已功

Tài Jí Jìn Tuì Bù Yǐ Gōng

Ward-off, roll-back, press and push come about through natural principle.
The yin and yang of water and fire are already mutually across.
Natural instinct is regained through the knowledge of the “four hands.”

Pluck, split, elbow, and bump come about as the square allows,
The four corners enable and distribute the comings and goings.

The “thirteen postures” line up one after another over and over without end.
For this reason they are sometimes referred to as “one long fist.”
The skill of the masters is being able to open and expand at the same time as they gather and collect.
In ten-thousand situations they never leave “great pivot (taiji).”

Tai Ji's Above and Below is also called Sky and Earth

Tài Jí Shàng Xià Míng Tiān Dì

The above and the below of the four hands are modeled after “sky and earth.”
Pluck, split, elbow and bump as well follow the same design.
Pluck is sky and bump is earth. They both are a response to the other.
How could there be any question of above and below not being “already across?”
It would be the same as trying to use split and elbow apart from each other.
When “giving and receiving” lose each other then all that remains is sighing and pity.
This is what is revealed with an understanding of the “matrix of sky and earth.”
Advance with elbow and return with split to maintain the human form.

Taiji's Human Matrix and the Eight Character Song

太極人盤八字歌

Tài Jí Rén Pán Bā Zì Gē

The straights and corners of the “eight patterns (bagua)” give rise to the Eight Character Song.
The math of thirteen is really not so complicated after all.

It is only complicated when there is no guideline or balancing point.
Neglecting the energy of the waist and crown will only lead to gasping and sighing.

Do not forget that the most essential teaching consists of only two words.
The ruler and ministers finely work the muscles and bones.

If the “cultivated skill (gongfu)” within is not continuous with the cultivated skill without
then in regards to one's own math how could the mistake ever belong to another?

In regards to the math of others, it all unfolds naturally from oneself.
The ultimate cause here is simply the coming and going of “earth and sky.”

All we are seeking is a home for the self without great disharmony.
Above and below, advance and retreat, forever continuously interwoven.