

Mantak Chia: At One With The Tao

Mantak Chia is one of the best known teachers of Taoist health and [meditation](#) practices in the world. As the founder of Healing Tao, Tao Yoga and Universal Tao Center, his teachings are propagated by over fifteen hundred Certified Instructors and practitioners on every continent, to hundreds of thousands of students. As an author, he's penned 38 books ranging from *Life in the Tao*, to the introduction of *Chi Nei Tsang* to the western world, to a wide ranging library of tomes and textbooks on *Sexual Reflexology*, *Emotional Wisdom*, *Iron Shirt Chi Gung*, and guidebooks to previously secret training exercises in books like the *Greatest Kan and Li*.



So what is it exactly, that this master of the Taoist arts teaches? The ancient Taoist practices he teaches form the core of a system designed to cultivate a balanced life of love, health, longevity, meaning and spiritual evolution. The key of the system is based on the science of developing and refining our [qi](#) – the subtle bio-electromagnetic life force - for self-healing and life enhancement. The result is an extremely practical and effective system of self-cultivation that leads to the harmonious evolution of body, mind and spirit.

So here I am, at Mantak's healing retreat in Thailand, a Shangri-la called Tao Garden, in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas in the countryside near Chiang Mai. It's a world renowned center for Taoist training and holistic healing, detoxification and rejuvenation. They offer a world class holistic clinic, which offers a rare integrated approach that combines Western medical knowledge with traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic techniques. Additionally, the Health Spa offers a full range of Thai Massage, Ayurvedic Massage, Chi Nei Tsang and a rare but amazing technique called Karsai Nei Tsang.

[Ed: By the way, if you haven't tried Chi Nei Tsang and Karsei Nei Tsang... you haven't lived! It is one of the most powerful modalities of somatic healing that I've ever experienced – a deep massage *for the organs*. And it feels absolutely amazing. Absolute bliss! *Bye bye toxins!*]

Yeah, Tao Garden is an amazing place, with terrific pristine energy and air, and the grounds are the canvas for a Taoist sculpture garden – Immortals, yin-yangs and seven star formations are everywhere. The place is so magical that I wake up early; it's so full of energy that I arrive at the dining hall before breakfast. They're still setting up the buffet, so I help myself to one of the several "healthy" teas that are served around the clock. I notice that the metal walkway that surrounds the dining hall, over a lovely pond or moat, is in the shape of the Big Dipper. Small teahouse gazebos are in the place of the stars. Sitting here in the open air dining hall, I can't help but observe how beautiful it is here, late December in Chiang Mai. The air is actually chilly, which is rare in this tropical climate. I notice that time passes differently here, it's not as stressful here, so time stretches out. It's almost like I can relish the present moment here.

A gentle wavelet of time passes, and breakfast is now being served. A few people show up. A couple from Moscow, a small group from Germany, a single Chinese woman from Beijing who sells real estate. Mantak arrives and everyone sneaks a quick peek at him. He's a celebrity here, like a Taoist Eckhart Tolle or yes, a Taoist Deepak Chopra. He smiles and waves at me. I motion to invite him to join me, and I notice that he's wearing a sweater – something I didn't bother to pack as I expected a constant onslaught of heat and humidity in this equatorial jungle known as the Land of Smiles. After we greet each other, he immediately offers, "you should wear something that covers your throat [chakra](#), so you don't catch a cough." That moment leaves an impression - his first thought is for my health. So I thank him for his advice, and I ask if it's okay to begin our promised interview.

All smiles, he sits down and a waitress comes over to take his order. His regular breakfast consists of two boiled eggs in some sort of tamari sauce, some stir fried morning glory, Chinese breakfast soup, a healthy tea. I have to say, that stir fried morning glory is delish! Casually, I remark that the air here, unlike Bangkok, is very clean. He replies, "That was our goal here – good air, good water and good food." I reply that the **feng shui** (the geomagnetic life energy of the earth) is also amazing, and he offers that his teacher helped map out the energy of the resort before they built it. And in this manner, with my questions and his answers, we slowly enter a dialog about **Taoism** and modern life –

***MOSES:** For this interview, I was hoping to start at the beginning... I heard that you started meditating at the age of six? Can you tell us what your childhood life was like?*

MANTAK: Yes, of course. When I was a child, I lived in a village that was about two hours by car from Bangkok, and situated between three Buddhist temples. So the temple was my playground and from my earliest recollections, I saw monks in meditation. I was six when I started to learn from a monk how to sit and "still my mind". Obviously, six is too young to learn how to meditate, but they found that I was able to sit quietly with them for 2 hours at a time. Eventually, they taught me a more formal meditation, and during those meditations it felt like I was flying and I could see lights and colours in my mind's eye.

In grammar school, I started learning traditional Thai boxing. And eventually, I began learning Tai Chi Chuan from Master Lu, who also introduced me to aikido and yoga. There was a feeling of coming home, that first time I did Tai Chi Chuan. This formed a good basis for my health, so years later, when I was a student in Hong Kong, I excelled in track and field events. It was in Hong Kong that my senior classmate introduced me to my first Taoist master, Master I Yun, which means White Cloud. He taught me how to circulate energy through the microcosmic orbit (see below for explanation) and all of the other esoteric practices that I teach.

***MOSES:** Wow, what a wonderful life! So let's delve into what it is that the Universal Tao can bring to people. What exactly do you teach and how can people benefit?*

MANTAK: The main thing that I teach is re-opening the microcosmic orbit. A baby's microcosmic orbit is fully open at birth – both the governor and the functional channels. However, it slowly gets blocked and shuts down as the baby ages and becomes an adult due to the normal stresses and processes of normal life. And if the orbit is blocked, your life energy won't flow, and then your blood slows down. This is the beginning of sickness. Also, like with any form of **qigong** – once you begin studying, you will refine your internal senses so that you can detect things that are out of balance very early, and be able to repair them before illness blossoms. So the goal is to reverse the aging process, and become again, at an energetic level, like a baby. It says in the Tao Te Ching, "To be one with the Tao is to be like an infant. Poisonous insects will not sting him, fierce animals will not stalk him, birds of prey will not attack him."

But again, the main thing that I teach is opening the microcosmic orbit, and through this method, people can really improve their lives. They can reclaim health and find greater peace of mind. I have personally taught over 100,000 people how to open their orbit, and I have over 1500 certified instructors who teach the method as well.

Deleting Negativity

Also, I teach how to achieve a state of emotional wisdom. By learning how to master the inner smile, and other techniques for deleting negativity, you can achieve a state of emotional peace and fulfillment.

MOSES: *Deleting negativity? That's very interesting... we Americans prefer to struggle a bit first. How do you do this?*



MANTAK: Most people in Western society are not taught how to deal effectively with our negative emotions. Some people act out their anger, frustration, or cruelty directly — by harming others. These people are abusive, either verbally or physically. And most of us regard negative emotions as weaknesses, character flaws, or even sins. As civilized people, we're taught to reject them – to deny and repress their existence, to train ourselves not to feel these disturbing energies. Of course, these negativities don't go away. They normally keep building up; and as they do, they embed themselves in muscles – some call it emotional armoring – but I've found that we eventually embed these negativities into our internal organs as well. Then, they express themselves as depression, and in this way, they sabotage our lives, creating neuroses, addictions, and even physical diseases. By silencing our natural responses to negative emotions, we silence our natural responses to the positive emotions as well. As a result, life may look good on the surface, but underneath, we feel hollow and meaningless.

So how do we deal with these negative emotions as Taoists? In essence, negativity is like energetic garbage. There is garbage that you can compost. There is garbage you can recycle. And there is garbage so toxic that you must destroy it. Like anger and hatred, these must be deleted. Regularly doing the Six Healing Sounds and the Inner Smile transforms, balances, and harmonizes all our emotions. However, if we have one or more resistant troubling emotions, we can unblock them with the Releasing One Emotion technique. You can read about this in my latest book, *Emotional Wisdom: Daily Tools for Transforming Anger, Depression, and Fear*. It's very powerful, and can be done in ten minutes, or you can spend longer if you wish. It is a powerful catalyst for emotional healing and change.

MOSES: *Can you give me a specific example of how someone has benefited?*

MANTAK: You know, you can speak with my co-author, Dena Saxer, about this method and this book. Her story is a very moving one, about the benefits of learning the Healing Tao.

[Ed: I did end up interviewing Dena Saxer, his co-author, in our book review about *Emotional Healing*, which you can find by clicking [HERE](#).]

MOSES: *Okay, I will. So now, can you tell me more about Master I Yun, and about your spiritual lineage?*

MANTAK: My lineage? Yes, yes. Our school, or lineage, is called the Inner Alchemy of Just Practice Taoists. People in our lineage usually learn from many systems - such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and even the science of today's world. We believe that highly refined states of inner experience and consciousness are the birthright of all humans and are accessible by everyone and anyone.

Inner-Alchemy-Just-Practice Taoists remove what is unnecessary, including all the dogmatic and superstitious rituals and ceremonies, and distill things down to that which works and is honestly effective. Then they go to the mountains and “just practice.” When they're done, they come down to teach and help people.

My master, I Yun finally decided to go to the mountain and practice things in this way. He was practicing and searching for all the masters in the mountains. Finally, he met my grandmaster, and he learned the whole

system that he passed on to me – the nine formulas of Taoist internal spiritual cultivation. The master gave no initiation, no celebration, nothing at all - just practice. Eventually, he told me to teach these to Chinese first and then to Westerners. My teacher left his body at the age of 96.

We must be grateful for this knowledge, as it took many generations of masters to refine their amazing experiences into nine practical stages of inner alchemy. So we seek to preserve and respect it. But at the same time, it's important to remember that the system itself demands that it evolve and improve. And so, I've been faithful to the structure of White Cloud's formulas, but I have added my own refinements based on study with many other masters – I studied with Master Meugi in Singapore, who taught him Kundalini, Taoist Yoga and the Buddha Palm. I studied with Dr. Mui Yimwattana in Thailand, who taught me Chi Nei Tsang. I studied with Master Cheng Yao-Lun who taught me the Shao-Lin Method of Internal Power, including the closely guarded secret of the organs, glands and bone marrow exercise known as Bone Marrow Nei Kung. I studied with Master Pan Yu, whose system combined Taoist, Buddhist and Zen teachings and taught me about the exchange of Yin and Yang power between men and women.

I have also drawn from my studies in Western anatomy, astronomy, astrology, medical science and quantum physics. I have combined all of these sources with my experience to create the Universal Healing Tao system.

***MOSES:** Amazing! Truly a great achievement. By the way, I love the name of your system, Just Practice Taoism. I had a very powerful tai chi teacher who was able to throw students about twenty feet – he was able to 'fa jing' (ie, to explosively discharge qi.) You could literally feel an electric shock when he threw you into the air. I heard a story about one time when his senior classmate trapped him in a room, locked the door, and demanded, "Tell me what Master taught you that made you better than me. Teach me the inner door secret!" My teacher responded, "Honestly, what happened is that several years ago, you stopped training with the passion you had when we were younger. That's the real reason you haven't been able to fa jing. I swear to you, there is no secret, just practice."*

I'm also a Taoist, I've studied in a school called "Complete Reality Taoism"... and I've done nothing but 'just practice' the basic meditation, and over time, the meditation has woven itself into the fabric of my everyday consciousness and unveiled the beauty of the present moment to me. But I digress... Anyway, instead of talking about Taoism, which I think you and I could do forever, let's talk about life. Okay, please think back and tell me what the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?

MANTAK: The most beautiful thing I've ever seen? Yes, it was the first time I did the Darkroom meditation with my master. I was only 14 and it was in Hong Kong. It was after [how many] days in complete dark, and at this time, we – my master and I – we were just sitting and calming the mind... and trying to look into the darkness inside ourselves, going very deep into our own space, the never-ending space inside us. And suddenly, in this vast darkness, I saw a spaceship, that was constructed of bones... and the bones were glowing. It was so beautiful, so otherworldly but at the same time it welcomed me. The spaceship was about 30 meters across, and shaped like a Tao chi ball at the center of it, with the Pa Kau eight trigrams spinning around it, so it looked like a round dish. At the same time, I could see my own bones glowing, and amazingly, I could see inside my body. My skin was illuminated from the inside. Later, I realized that this Dark Room work helped open up my third eye so I could see such things.

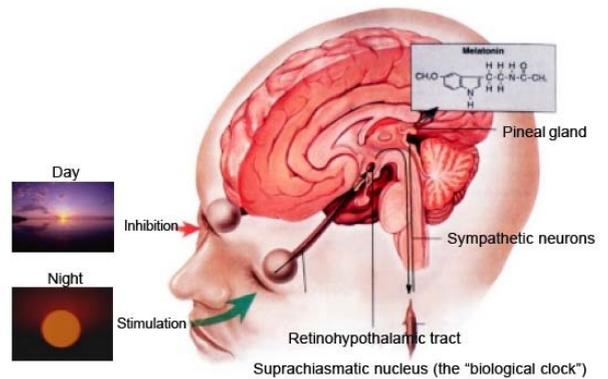
It is hard to explain, but the spaceship tried to show me which meditations were the most important for me to practice, and transmitted to me the idea that it was possible to transform the bones and the marrow - into light. The bones are possibly our most important structure, as the marrow produces red, white and stem cells. Anyway, through this vision, I came to realize that I needed to work with the bones – which is why so many of my courses emphasize work with the bones, like the Bone Marrow Nei Kung and the Iron shirt Chi Kung.

This was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, and to this day, when I do the Dark Room work, the vision comes back to me repeatedly.

The Dark Room

MOSES: *Fascinating, please tell us more about Dark Room work, it sounds very strange and powerful!*

MANTAK: Yes, yes, very powerful. All spiritual traditions have used Dark Room techniques in the pursuit of enlightenment. In Egypt they used the Pyramids, in Rome the catacombs, and by the Essenes, near the Dead Sea, they used caves. In the Taoist tradition, caves were also used for higher level practices. In Taoism, the cave found on the Immortal Mountain, Wu San, represents the Perfect Inner Alchemy Chamber. Meditating and fasting in a special cave that has the right resonant energies is the final journey of our spiritual work.



The Tao says: *'When you go into the dark and this becomes total, the darkness soon turns into light.'* In the Dark Room, we enter a primordial state that reunites us with the true self and divinity within. In the Dark Room, you can literally 'conduct' the universal energy. You might see into the past and future, understand the true meaning of existence, and begin to understand the order of things.

What's more, the Dark Room is the perfect "in vivo" laboratory for body chemistry. In this perfect pitch darkness, you can actualize successively higher states of divine consciousness, correlating with the synthesis and accumulation of psychedelic chemicals within the brain. Melatonin, a regulatory hormone, quiets the body and mind in preparation for the finer and subtler realities of higher consciousness – this happens during the first few days in the Dark Room. Around the fourth or fifth day, pinoline – a neurohormone that affects the neuro-transmitters of the brain, is produced, which triggers visions and dream-states that merge with our conscious awareness. After about a week, the brain synthesizes the "spirit molecules" – also known as DMT, which facilitates the transcendental experiences of universal love and compassion. In Taoist terms, this darkness work activates the deepest centers within the brain, the glands of the Crystal Palace, establishing a connection with the Original Source, the Wu Chi.

We've built a Dark Room facility here at Tao Garden. The building is constructed of bricks made from the red earth of Thailand, preserving the earth elements of the original cave. The rooms are enclosed and encased in light- and sound-proof sheaths. Two tiers of bedrooms surround the central area, each with private bath. The entire facility is ventilated with fresh air intakes and air conditioning systems. Food is specially prepared to meet the particular requirements of the body, mind, and spirit in attaining the goals of dark room enlightenment. Fresh juices and soups are served for "breakfast" and a light organic meal are served in the "afternoon."

The Universal Tao Dark Room is currently the largest and most advanced Dark Room meditation facility in the world. Aspiring to connect with the Tao, our participants in our darkness retreats remain in utter and complete darkness for one, two... or even three weeks, because your body in pure darkness is a perfect laboratory for Inner Alchemy. In our Dark Room, the spiritual knowledge gained by Taoist masters over the ages merges and blends with the insights of 21st century science and technology.

MOSES: *What about dreams?*

MANTAK: During Dark Room meditation, dreams become more lucid, and the dream state may even manifest in our conscious awareness. In other words, as melatonin gradually accumulates in the brain, we begin to experience the revelations of sleep in our waking consciousness. In this way, aspects of our true nature begin to reveal themselves. Sleep consciousness is a profound state of rejuvenation and reconnection to our divine source.

Let's see, there's one more thing I can tell you. I can tell you that extended dark room retreats alter sleep cycles somewhat. Usually, people normally sleep more at the beginning of a retreat since many – especially

overworked highly stressed Americans – are profoundly exhausted and burned out and sleep-deprived. After two to three days, however, enough melatonin is generated to repair that deficit, and slowly the need for sleep is diminished. In fact, a more restful state of being becomes a pervasive aspect of every day. After a couple of weeks of dark room meditation, one may need only a few hours of sleep each night, and that sleep is often spent in continuous consciousness.

Taoist Quantum Mechanics

MOSES: *One thing that really strikes me is how you merge science and spirituality – as you do with neurophysiology of dark room work and with holistic stem cell research. It's such a relief to see your work, as well as the work of the Dalai Lama who is also intensely interested in science. In America, it seems that all the religious people try to fight science, deny evolution, suppress stem cell research. Anyway, I was trained as a physicist myself, and I'm very curious about your Taoist perspective on quantum physics. Can you elucidate about this?*

MANTAK: Do you know about the theory of zero point fields? [Note: I nod, but to tell the truth, my physics is awfully rusty.] Okay, it's like this... quantum mechanics states that there is no such thing as a vacuum, or pure nothingness. What we tend to think of as a void is, in subatomic terms, actually a hive of activity, buzzing with energy and activity.

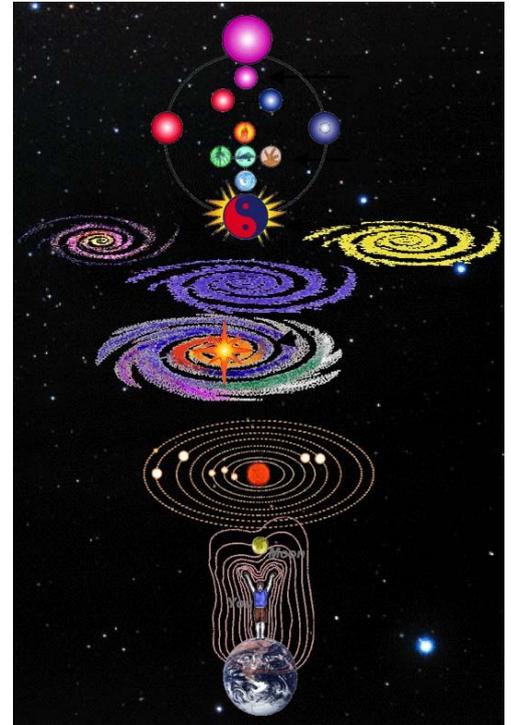
MOSES: *Yeah, I remember that from my basic quantum mechanics classes... I remember something called the Dirac Sea, named after the physicist Paul Dirac, in that any point of vacuum is in fact an infinite sea of particles, and we just see the surface, not the infinity below. We may see an empty sea, but it's actually a totality.*

MANTAK: Right! I have heard it called a Quantum Sea of Light. What quantum physics proposes is that we and our universe live and breathe in a sea of motion and activity - a quantum sea of energy and particles and fields. This is also called the Zero Point Field. Even 'real' particles are nothing more than a little knot of energy which briefly emerges and disappears back into the underlying field.

The existence of the Zero Point Field implies that all matter in the universe is interconnected by waves, which are spread out through time and space and can carry on to infinity, tying one part of the universe to every other part. It might be possible that this offers an avenue, that we can pursue to find the scientific explanation for many metaphysical notions, such as the structure of qi, described in ancient texts as something akin to an energy field.

In fact, everything in our world, anything you hold in your hand, no matter how dense, how heavy, how large, on its most fundamental level boils down to a collection of electric charges interacting with a background sea of electromagnetic and other energetic fields. Mass is not equivalent to energy; matter *is* energy. The property of inertia possessed by all objects in the physical universe is simply resistance to being accelerated through the Zero Point Field.

MOSES: *Wow! That's amazing! A theory for why inertia happens! That's beautiful! It gives me a braingasm to think about the merging of Taoist physics and metaphysics. I remember when I was a freshman at Caltech, and sitting in a lecture by the Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman. He gave a lecture on "the principle of least action", that states that nature always takes the most energetically economical path, with least wasted energy and force. I realized later that this was the same as the principle of wu wei and got a similar rush of realization.*



MANTAK: Exactly, wu wei is not “non action”, but “no wasted action” or as you say, “least action”. So much of physics and Taoism are aligned, because the original Taoists could see directly into the reality of existence. We must strive to be like the original Taoists, like Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Lü Tung-Pin.

For example, even today, no one really understands how acupuncture actually works, only that it does. We Taoists should pursue a complete understanding of qi and empty force and psychic phenomena and human evolution, just like scientists chase the Higgs Boson, or seek an explanation for why the Earth’s magnetic pole flips every million years, or explain how consciousness emerges from the brain. Taoism is not just a religion, but a science and an art.

***MOSES:** Wonderful! What a terrific talk. Anyway, I could talk to you about this for days and days, but we’re out of time. So let me ask just a couple of more questions to finish up... first, what’s next for Mantak Chia? What are you doing next?*

MANTAK: Every year, I go on a worldwide tour to visit my many certified instructors and students, and I teach in workshops in several countries. I’ll be in America in April, and teaching several workshops in California. I’m speaking in a lecture with Peter Russell, who is a writer and meditation teacher, and we’ll be talking about finding peace in a troubled world. The lecture is on April 22nd. There’s a weekend workshop on the 23rd and 24th, which is an introductory course on Universal Tao. After this, there will be a four day intensive, for advanced studies. And after this, many other workshops all over the world. I would be very happy if the reader of this article would like to learn more, and come to one of my workshops.

***MOSES:** Can you tell me more about what you’ll be teaching?*

MANTAK: Yes! The weekend workshop is focused on basic practices, like the Cosmic Inner Smile and Six Healing Sounds. For example, Taoists use the power of smiling to activate the relaxation response in the parasympathetic nervous system. Also, it will give you the ability to transform negative emotions within the body, resulting in greater mental clarity and lightness of heart. Transforming negative emotional energy patterns into the positive components in the organs helps to reprogram the genes and DNA. The main portion of this weekend delves into the Microcosmic Orbit: I will teach you how to open your chi to flow in the energy pathways from the perineum up the spine, through the head and back down the front side. Also, I’ll teach some Sexual Reflexology based on the Taoist sexual points, and this method of acupressure has not only a great healing effect but also deepens intimacy. Finally, I’ll talk a bit about Chi Nei Tsang, a powerful massage therapy for deep organ detoxification, and show some self-massage techniques that are useful for balancing your qi flow.



As for the Four Day Advanced Intensive – if you have not studied with me before, this intensive requires the weekend workshop as a prerequisite. The Advanced Intensive begins with the Lesser Kan & Li meditation, which builds an energetic Internal Cauldron inside the body to reverse the Fire and Water energies and concentrates all your energies into the Tan T'ien. Our spiritual fetus is established in the tan tien. You’ll also learn how to purify the organs, spinal cord, lymphatic & nervous systems, 12 channels and Crystal Room. Spring is a good time to get a boost of energy in these Kan and Li practices. The vernal equinox at the beginning of spring time is when the yin and yang energies are balanced between the cold water energy of winter and the hot fire energy of summer. So, humans can make use of this special offering of the primordial force from the earth for the inner alchemy in resonance with our kidney/sexual energy and our heart energy that we are missing. This is a special time to get a huge boost of the earth's primordial chi.

Then, we move to the intensive study of Chi Nei Tsang, which is an internal organ qi massage which helps release stress and promotes healing by using techniques of massage directly over the navel and surrounding abdominal area where stress, tension and negative emotions accumulate and congest. So if you are a

bodyworker who wishes to add this powerful technique to your repertoire of massage styles, this is where you can begin to learn. Also, for the first time in North America, I will teach the theoretical foundation of Karsei Nei Tsang, a massage system that specifically improves the health of the genital area. Most recipients of Karsei Nei Tsang experience a strong sensation of opening the energy channels from the sexual area to the kidneys, abdomen, legs, the brain and other parts of the body. Most importantly, this enables the primordial force and the stem cells to refresh, heal and regenerate more effectively. On the last day, I will teach Supreme Inner Sexual Alchemy, so you can multiply the primordial qi. Men will learn how to control ejaculation and to transform the sexual energy into qi and then transform it up to spirit force. Women learn how to control menstruation and transform the blood into chi and likewise transform it up to spirit force.

***MOSES:** That sounds like a can't miss week of Taoist teachings. I look forward to attending! Okay, we're done now, but before we stop, we have one final question that is for "fun". Please spontaneously give us a haiku or poem that expresses your life philosophy...*

MANTAK: Okay, here it is:

Know your goal in life, by finding your infant soul

Learn how to educate it, with love and wisdom, to become truly free

Note: The Spirituality Network and OneTantra are producing a week of workshops for Mantak Chia in April in the San Francisco Bay Area. You can find out more here about the program:

<http://www.onetantra.com/catalog/51-presenting-master-mantak-chia-bay-area-workshop-program.html>

<http://www.onetantra.com/catalog/50-mind/body/tao-an-evening-with-mantak-chia-and-peter-russell.html>

For more about Mantak Chia's work, visit: <http://www.universal-tao.com/>

If you live in Seattle, Portland, New York, Boston, Asheville or Toronto, Master Chia will be teaching a workshop in your town: http://www.universal-tao.com/world_tour/masterchia_worldtour.html

For more about Tao Garden, visit: <http://www.tao-garden.com/>