
ATTRIBUTES OF A MASTER

By Vincent J. Lasorso Jr.

The "S" Principles of Power (See T'ai Chi, February 1987) described six principles that are necessary for the physical progression and understanding of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Each of those principles were only summarized since they would take a book to describe them in detail. The seventh "S" Principle would take several books to describe, since it deals with the self.

It would be impossible to address self in any article, so I will discuss some general attributes necessary in achieving mastership.

Thinking makes the master

Becoming a master of anything is primarily a matter of thinking rather than skill. Skill alone creates technicians, not masters.

A master's skill is manifested by his thinking and he uses that skill as a tool to obtain a higher level of purpose and understanding of the complex simplicity of the universe, or at least his art.

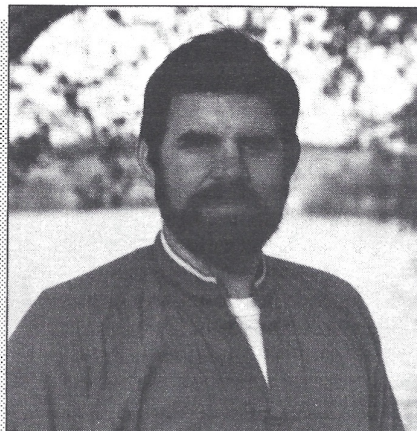
To the master, skill is not an end to itself, but part of an artistic expression, which is used to create personal, and possibly, universal harmony.

6 basic attributes of masters

The expression is forever changing and evolving, but there are some constant attributes that are common to all masters.

The six basic attributes of a master are: patience, practice, discipline, inquiry, experimentation and imagination.

Patience is an attribute that many people find difficult. Actually, their difficulty is preventing impatience. A lack of patience creates frustration, confusion and negativism, which results in internal conflict and stress.



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These manifestations direct your attention away from what you wish to achieve by restricting your thinking to a primitive level. Impatience is the result of selfish egotism.

If you will recall the last time you were impatient, you'll probably find that it was caused by something interfering with your personal desires (or what you may consider needs).

This resulted in anger, stress or resentment that anyone (or thing) dare defy your wishes! Maybe you were impatient with yourself for not being able to perform a task or job to standards (most likely your own).

Patience then requires that you change your expectation and/or standards.

'A master sets goals not for the sake of obtainment, but for a method of living.'

The master sees himself as an equal to all living creatures. With this realization, he does not see where his needs are of any more importance than anyone else.

Thus, he is not distressed by inconveniences resulting from the actions of others. (This realization of equality is the fundamental element of Eastern philosophy and most religious

systems which is well beyond the scope of this discussion.)

The problem with trying to obtain standards is that our ego desire is to obtain that standard immediately, or at least quicker than normal.

When we don't achieve our ego desire, we create reasons or rationalizations on why we can't do it. We suffer impatience.

The master sets his own agenda and standards and uses them as guidelines and not absolute goals. A master sets goals not for the sake of obtainment, but for a method of living.

Practice is the actual process of learning a skill or concept. It is through practice that we can take information and learn how to apply it to a purpose.

Rote learning is not enough

The best example is that a person who earns a medical doctorate is not a physician by definition.

Learning is divided into two processes. The first phase is directed toward imitation, or rote learning (practice). The second phase is the application of the acquired material.

Let's use reading as an example. First you learned the alphabet by rote. That is strict memorization.

Then you learned to form words, sentences, paragraphs, etc., until you developed the skills to read.

Reading didn't really begin until you understood that the rote items, in this case the letters, could be combined and reorganized to create meanings.

Continual rote practice of the letters would not have given you the ability to read. For that matter, it would not have even given you the insight that reading was even possible. (Unfortunately, many people practice T'ai Chi Ch'uan at this level.)

It is necessary to introduce other information from inquiry and imagination to provide direction to your

practice so that reading can be accomplished.

Practice should be purposeful. It should be directed toward answering the questions of inquiry and fulfilling the objectives of the imagination.

It is only through directed practice that you will be able to develop the ability to apply the skills and concepts that you acquire.

Rehearsing skills helps

Practice applies to concepts as well as skills. A simple yet effective method of practicing a concept (that is information which is intangible) is to role play a teacher/student conflict in your mind.

You, as the student, aggressively challenge the concept premises and information. Your role as the teacher is to answer the questions and prove the concept to the student.

(You most likely will have to use inquiry to find adequate proof.)

This process helps forge concepts into your very being in a relatively objective manner.

Another cognitive method of practice is called rehearsal. Rehearsal is the visualization/role playing process in which you set up theoretical situations and then work through them.

You can rehearse a skill, concept or both, in the most realistic fashion that you can imagine.

You control the situation, so you can vary the results and responses to suit the practice objectives.

Remember, practice is a learning process, not a fanciful daydream. I knew a paramedic who used rehearsal to treat thousands of patients with the most improbable combinations of illnesses and circumstances imaginable.

He developed an experience base that made any real world emergency an easily manageable event.

A master realizes the importance of practice as a basis for experience and ultimately wisdom.

Discipline, like patience, is not a problem. It is the lack of discipline, or, more correctly commitment, that causes a problem.

No matter how strong a commitment you have to obtaining your goals, there will be times when you wish to discontinue your efforts.

This is not the time to chide yourself for a lack of discipline. In fact, depending on your goal, a short layoff may serve to be a positive action.

A month off from a ten-year goal will hardly be noticed. But to most people, discipline means forcing yourself to go on when the going gets tough.

It means fight and overcome the conflict between you and your objective (the ego self again). Conflict breeds conflict!

The result of practice under conflict is a focus on the conflict, rather than the objective. As a result, you become ineffective in your efforts. Positive discipline, on the other hand, evolves from the continual reaffirmation of your commitment to the goal.

Remember, a master sets goals as a guideline and not for obtainment. Discipline establishes a way of living to prevent problems, not solve them.

The feeling of sacrifice is the source of discipline problems. The master realizes with commitment there is no sacrifice.

Inquiry is the process of learning the relative meaning, intention and purpose of something.

This is not, as the name implies, a questioning process, but an answering one.

Inquiry is the action of discovering inter-relationships. Nothing has meaning until it is related to something else. Recognizing that nothing is absolute, inquiry attempts to identify many alternative relationships.

Inquiry requires evaluation of what is known, determines what is needed to be known, then seeks to

find the critical relationship. (Much of this can be accomplished subconsciously.)

Everything known to man is the result of the action/reaction relationship.

Thus, relationships are the essence of being. The more relationships that you understand and the more inter-relationships that you identify, the more control and knowledge you acquire about universal principles.

Life becomes a learning game

The use of inquiry makes life a constant period of education and enlightenment, sort of a learning game.

There is always another relationship to discover. Thus, you must use imagination in conjunction with inquiry to expand your inquiry process to the infinite.

The master uses inquiry as the basis for understanding and creativity.

Experimentation is the application of acquired knowledge and theories to reality.

Common knowledge is challenged

Ultimately, one has to test his knowledge to gain confidence and experience. Experimentation involves risk and the willingness to be labeled a nonconformist, or even an outcast.

Experimenting directly challenges common knowledge and bears the risk of failure.

The potential rewards could provide giant leaps for personal development or even the development of man.

One must experiment with everything to gain one's own personal understanding, rather than the common understanding.

The master uses experimentation as a means of progress and to over-



Vincent Lasorso executes "Strike Ears"

come limitation.

Imagination is the basis of the master's power in life. We cannot do what we do not first imagine. We can not cross the street if we do not first see ourselves on the other side. Imagination gives us vision, without which we would flounder in mediocrity.

You must release your imagination to become a "possibilities thinker." All things are possible if you apply the five other attributes of mastery to what you imagine.

"The master uses imagination to create his destiny."

Imagine the possibilities. We use imagination to discover universal relationships. We use imagination to go beyond absolutes. The master uses imagination to create his destiny.

Continual practice and application of these attributes forges them into an unconscious process of your everyday thinking.

These attributes will become the way you subconsciously (intuitively) process information. This will strengthen your intuition, since you will understand how it works.

Intuition will no longer be "gut feelings," but feelings that you can depend on to guide you through your life. You will be able to let go and trust your feelings so you can be one with the "force."

The master depends on his intuition and not his ego.