Finding your Pakua and Centering your Focus

When we first learn Tai Chi with the Moy form, we focus on turning to square the hips. Our structural focus is to try and turn the body to be square in position. However, once we have learnt what square might be, there is the potential to play with this position and find a relaxation in it that is not inspired by forcefully turning and torqueing. This exploration takes time and experience with the moves of the Tor Yu’s within the set. If you haven’t had much experience with the Tor Yu by itself, consider taking a few minutes now to do some Tor Yu’s right and left, or to play with “Grasp Bird’s Tail” from the beginning of the 108 Moving Meditation. Once you have felt what your body feels like to square the hip in this formation, then follow along to the next step.

As you look at the spider’s web, imagine it as a diamond with 8 sides, three layers deep and extending back like a cone. The Chinese representation includes the Trigrams from I Ching with each side representing different aspects of direction, seasons, emotions and more. Finding similar representations in nature, like the spider’s web, we can transpose this symbol onto the Chakras in the body or into the pelvis. In his book, “Fusion of the Five Elements: Meditations for Transforming Negative Emotions,” Mantak Chia explores the region of the Lower Dan Tien which is located at the belly button (or just slightly above or below the belly button) and in the back near the coccyx at about Lumbar 2 and 3. Descending a line straight down from the arm pit to the hip locates the side points both right and left. The face of the diamond is out with the coned point focusing in to where the “golden pill,” “dan tien,” or the “cauldron” is located. With the 4 points converging to this center, the movement of the pelvis is able to expand and contract through the region and create the impetus for expansion of the energy storage system of the lower dan tien.

To explore what these spaces “feel” like, try this exercise. Do a 108 Moving Meditation to create the whole body link up that activates the entire system network in the body. Then, focus on just the front Pakua as you do the first 17 moves from the set. Notice how the body moves, where there is tension, where there is relaxation, where there is ease and flow of movement, where there is disjointed movement. Then, repeat this same exercise for the back Pakua, the right Pakua, the left Pakua and then together as they radiate in to the Golden Pill. Now take a few moments to reflect on the experience of focusing on each side. Did you notice differences, similarities, anything you would not normally sense? This exploration helps to identify where there is imbalance within the structure and energy flow within the body. Continuing to focus on the pakua’s can increase awareness going forward.

Now explore the Brush knee pattern going forward for 8 movements, and then using Repulse the Monkey for 8 moves coming backwards. This pattern is wonderful for goal setting and changing patterns with intention as the Monkey thoughts are released or calmed and the stepping forward into the future brings a new sense of possibility that is in present time. While exploring this pattern, focus into the pakua’s and notice the freedom that you can find in the hip action. You may need to pull the hips back slightly to open the lower back. Many people tend to lean forward into the hip thinking this is giving them more stretch, but in reality, it is squaring the hip but closing the back. By pulling the hips back and realizing the fluid rotation of the squaring there is an openness through the lumbar region that allows a free flow of energy through the entire region. Explore the positioning and the feeling of the pakua’s and the building of energy within the golden pill.

Standing meditation. Once you have finished exploring, take time to stand with the palms of the hands turned towards the lower dan tien. Stand down with a relaxation in the knees and back, let the deep breathes flow through the body. With intention and awareness, see the 4 pakua’s center in to the golden pill and imagine the expansion of energy being stored within the space. Be aware of what this feels like so that you can begin to explore knowing when you are energetically supported and when this might be depleted.

As you become more aware of the pakua’s you can continue to bring support and expansion to them so that the power of the space can radiate energy in and out of the body.

Further exploration can bring awareness to the symbol within the palms and the feet. Connecting them to the ground or to the sky can also enhance the feeling of energy flowing through to create grounding or connection of heaven and earth.