



## **Dyeing the Cloth – The Experiential Heart of T'ai Chi Chih® (YouTube video) TCC Teachers' Conference July 2022**

By Amy Tyksinski

I have been drawn lately to how important the heart is in T'ai Chi Chih, and its connection to what it is that we are cultivating.

In his book *20th Century Psalms*, Justin Stone, the originator of T'ai Chi Chih, reflected on his poem, "Only the human heart hears the falling snow." This poem, he said, "is meant to reveal that this Cosmos is nothing but the human heart" (Stone, p. 50).

Justin used to talk about Dyeing the Cloth as a metaphor to illustrate the process of how we come to join this human Cosmic heart. He explained that the first time the cloth is dipped into the dye, much of it runs off. But with patience and faith in knowing what we ARE, eventually, "Mind takes on the aspects of Reality like a cloth gradually being dyed."\* What is it that we are that we must have faith can be Realized? "Call it whatever you want," he'd say, and then go on to give several names: "The 'Chi', Divinity, God, the Absolute, Cosmic Consciousness, the Real."

"Expanding ego to encompass all = Universal Consciousness taking over individual consciousness = becoming large hearted," Justin said one Saturday night.

How fortunate we are to have T'ai Chi Chih to teach us how to receive and to encourage us to become large hearted as we immerse ourselves again and again and again in this cosmic heartbeat.

"TCC is done without the intellect when it's done well!" said Justin emphatically.

In his poem "Suffer the leaves to fall" Justin elaborated, "'Suffer' can mean two things: 1. Allow 2. Have pain." Then he interpreted the Buddha as saying, "If you want to give up suffering, you must give up your individuality."

As we consciously practice letting go physically within our bodies through our TCC practice, in our wrists, our shoulders, by releasing the little muscles in our stomachs, in this way, the resistance melts, the suffering dissolves and the "chi" flows more freely. We are able to merge

more completely with the dye. Recognizing and Allowing the Cosmic heartbeat that thrums through all things becomes easier.

Justin inspired me greatly when he said, “Don’t jump around from thing to thing – You must do it yourself! It has to come from inside! Knowing your Self is Knowing Reality. There is no such thing as an unimportant life. Everybody has a valuable life. Treat it that way. Your life is One. Oneness = completeness. There has always been the uncarved block. It hasn’t changed. Said another way, ‘Adam and Eve never left the Garden of Eden.’”

“At an ultimate level, there is only one thing going on – Every inch has intelligence and energy!” he proclaimed.

“One-pointedness of mind is the aim of meditation. Doing one thing over and over allows you to develop vashanas (author’s note: also spelled “vasanas” in Sanskrit) around that technique so it is best to stick to one thing. What is Reality? It differentiates between what is unreal (temporal) and the Eternal/Unchanging/Lasting. The highest goal of meditation is to reach the Lasting. Slowly, [through repetition] like dipping a cloth into dye, you become dyed in the eternal,” Justin reflected.

Importantly, Justin emphasized the connection between devotion and faith.

“Devotion is the development of faith. Faith in your body is very important. No faith, no devotion. Without faith, you cannot practice concentration or meditation. You must have faith in yourself. Faith in divinity IS faith in yourself if that voice can be followed. Each one of us has something inside of us which provides signposts,” he said.

Justin once wrote a letter to Paul Reps saying, “A cat is the perfect Zen monk,” to which Paul Reps replied, “This news that man is evolving to the state of a cat is delicious.” After telling this story, Justin then urged us to regard our spiritual practice and to ask ourselves: “Do I want to change?” and then he clarified: “Change means in your thinking. What you are attached to.” He went on to say: “Your future lives, circumstances are affected by what you do now. Each person has to discover his or her own nature.”

“TCC is not of words, it is of feeling!” Justin reminded us.

As we learn to have Faith in ourselves in what we are, our devotion to this dyeing process grows. “Devotion cultures the heart,” said Justin. We come to feel the chi and our capacity to commune directly with this universal energy sea enriches us evermore. “Everywhere is the way home,” said Justin. And he clarified, “Everything has meaning.”

So we can remember that the dyeing of the cloth is a devotional act. The perseverance of going deeper into our practice of T’ai Chi Chih claims within it a faithful Knowing of our own inherent divinity, and with reverence, we join this Universal Energy. We become large hearted.

“Try not to be impatient, said Justin, “enjoy the ride.”

*\*Author’s note: direct quotations were recorded during small group sessions with Justin.*

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