

Scent of a Forgotten Flower
Meditations on Tai Chi



Dr. Greg Lawton

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Photography and layout – Dr. Gregory T. Lawton



**These words come to me
like borrowed clothes,
used and well worn.**

**My debt is to all my teachers,
Dr. James Schleichert, Mr. Kikrullah Khadem,
Mrs. Joan Laird, and Professor Chi-Kwang Huo.**

**I dedicate these thoughts to
Ginny, Megan, and Jaime
who continue to teach me
about love.**

About the author -

Dr. Gregory T. Lawton began his martial art training as a child. He has trained in western boxing, wrestling, and Asian martial arts such as Aikido, Jujitsu, Kenpo, and Tai Chi Chuan. He is an 8th degree black belt in Kosho Ryu Kenpo Jujitsu and holds the title of Yudansha Taigu.

Dr. Lawton's main and most noted Tai Chi Chuan instructor was Professor Chi-Kwang Huo. Professor Huo, the renowned Chinese scholar, artist and calligrapher who served as Taiwan's ambassador to France and who was a personal friend of Pablo Picasso, was a master martial artist and was a student of Yang Shao Hou of the Yang Family.

Dr. Lawton is a health science writer and the author of over two hundred books, manuals and educational products ranging from massage therapy and martial arts, to health promotion, and from alternative medicine to conventional medicine.

He is a Vietnam era veteran and was honorably discharged from the US Army with the rank of Sergeant E-5.



Tai Chi, The Grand Ultimate Universe

These words come to me like hand-me-down clothes, used and well worn... My mother planted a flower garden every spring and somehow we always ended up with a handful of mixed flower seeds that we could not identify, the seeds of unknown flowers. These seeds were planted in a separate part of the garden and we would wait their blooming with special anticipation. When these seeds finally burst forth in a riot of color and fragrance we delighted in the surprise - and in the flowers variety of colors, sizes and shapes. Humanity is such a garden.

The words Tai Chi may be translated to mean the Grand Ultimate and the words Grand Ultimate in turn may be translated to mean the Universe. Whatever you call it or think of it, whether universe, creation, or God, some thoughts are very difficult to express, that is why God made flowers...



Seeds of an Unknown Flower

Who knows what we are to be? Like the seeds of unknown flowers we do not know what will bloom from us, what words will take hold of our heart and transform us, what change today will produce tomorrow, or tomorrow, or tomorrow.

The gnarled hands of the wizened Gardener have pushed seeds deep within the fertile soil of your soul and there shrouded in the earthiness of your being they wait to bloom in resplendent beauty.

More powerful than the splitting of an atom is the change of a human heart. I think that the greatest changes in my life resulted from a word, a gesture, a single deed, the silent passing of a gift from one hand to another, so gently and generously given that, at that moment, I did not recognize the blessing.

Are you seeking the expression of the trueness of your spirit or have you allowed seeds to lay dormant within you? Awaken while there is still yet time and bless mankind with the beauty of your flowering soul.

Sun is a word that cannot measure the splendor of the Sun, as your value cannot be measured by words. Live then so that like the seeds of an unknown flower your beauty will bloom, petal by glorious petal.

Flowers of the Heart



Tai Chi is the essence that no cup can contain. If I understand Tai Chi as this or that, as martial art, exercise, medicine, or meditation, it is not this, but it contains these. Tai Chi, the Grand Ultimate cannot be measured, defined, or contained. I perceive it as a dance, Wu, and my spirit, SHEN, whirls and I call it SHEN WU or Spirit Dance.

My first Tai Chi began without a teacher or a school. It began in the forest where I stood listening to the trees. To the sound of wind in the leaves I asked, what is this? The whispered answer, "Learning, it is called learning."

How can the earth hang in space?

— Balance —

How can fire consume wood?

— Focus —

How can water flow?

— Change —

How can you be all of this?

— Patience —

No sword cuts as keenly, no spear pierces so deeply, as a spirit centered and surrendered to God.

Power? Power is the ability to change a heart.

You must obtain that truth which is a reflection of yourself.

What then is the true commencement, the beginning? Prayer, it begins and it ends with God.

What does this have to do with martial art? More than chopping wood with an empty hand, more than belts and trophies. More than pride or fame, more than hollow words and vanity, more than you know.

Who shapes whom? Is the pot shaped by the potter or is the potter formed by the art? Do I create my Tai Chi or does my Tai Chi recreate me? Do I change you or do you change me?

I am a teacher by accident, like a leaf lifted by the wind. I have no intent, no feeling about being a leaf. No knowledge of where I am being lifted. I only trust the wind.



If you seek Her in the places of comfort,
She will not be found.
If you look for her in her room,
She will not be found.
If you search the streets,
She will not be found.
How can She be found?
“Underneath the sky upon a spinning ball, gently swaying,
dancing in the light, there She will be.”

Everything is Tai Chi, every action, every thought and every interaction and every dynamic between us. Our relationship is Tai Chi, yin and yang and fire and water. Test me and I will yield and redirect you, challenge me and I will dissolve and disappear. Attack me and I will disarm you and send you away confused. Tai Chi begins in the mind and never needs a hand or foot to punctuate conflict.

This is true about my teacher. Contend with him and he dissolves into a mist, like moisture on a velvet leaf, transforming and rising like vapor and falling again like snow on ice. Change is difficult to grasp in even the strongest hand.

How do we measure how capable we are? Not by what we do, but rather by what we still cannot do. How then do we know how much we know? By what we still do not know.

You have another side, the back of the mirror. It does not love or hate and so is fair. It does not choose allegiance and so is just. It simply is and so becomes.



The craftsman measures his trade and is sure of his labor. The artist labors within the unknown and is measured by the work.

My teacher touched me and now I touch you. The cellist's bow draws across the cello and sounds move the heart. These vibrations pass between us.

What about intuition? That is Tai Chi in motion. At some point you must leave the surety of your solo dance and in a blinding whirl of movement give into intuition. Just surrender to it, like your last breath of air.

How do you determine a good teacher? Such a teacher is determined by the changes in your own life.

A certain kind of student wants to bend Tai Chi, the training, and the teacher, to their will and understanding. They want to "get it" their way, the forms, the ability. Eventually, they learn, if they persevere, that there is no "it" to "get".

Want to know a secret, the secret of change? Forgive yourself and accept the grace. Do it quickly and get on with the living, or by the time you figure this out it will all be over. How long do you want to repeat the same mistakes and lessons?

Why do we wear a uniform of black and white? It is life and death, a reminder of the two. There is no greater measure of mortality than loss and no greater lesson than death.

When you enter the school, you bow. Not to a man or a woman. You bow with humility to “a place where God dwells”.

Centering is consciousness, nothing more.

To become more something must first be given up.

Can you be empty even beyond your thoughts of emptiness?

Risk and pain are the ingredients of change.

Mount the steed of change but let the reins hang free. Ride the energy; it knows the path of lightning.

Listen! There is nothing to hear, and there are no secrets. It is all there for you. Sand on the beach, light in the sky, rain in the night, it is there abundantly. Why wear a blindfold to the sunrise!

Bring the impulse of Tai Chi into your body like a primal urge, sensuous and erotic.

Heaven and earth, it is all within you, it is all Tai Chi.

Happiness. If you feel powerful, if you can impress, if you can acquire something you do not possess. Perhaps then you will feel fulfilled and know true happiness? I do not know the answers or how to help you understand, you see, it's only slow dancing to me.

Your fear has a harsh voice, I was never so unkind to you.



The uplifting winds carry an uncountable number of seeds; perchance a few may take root. 10,000 students give birth to one teacher and one teacher to one true student.

You cannot give a gift that you do not possess and you cannot teach what you do not know. You can only know the secrets that you have experienced. You can only pass on what is accepted. Only the fish understands the sea, the bird the air, and you, only you can know the higher things and the secrets that God whispers in your heart.

Do I confuse you, does this sound like nonsense? Life is after all what you see of it. Are you looking up or down, in or out?

Imagine that you are a child, caught in a dream of unhappiness. Would it be unkind to beat you with a stick that perchance you might awaken to paradise?

What is this strange dream you dream endlessly in which you create your own world and image? The nightmare that you fear is awakening. What delusion! You might as well seek the moon in the pond.



Falling Petals in Stillness

Finding the center is difficult. It might take one student ten years, another ten months, and yet another but a moment. We seek the quiet, the still point, the silent unity of our souls. In the Michelangelo painting a finger of God touches the hand of man, the hand of the child grasping the finger of its Father and holding tightly.



In Tai Chi take the Hand of God and allow yourself to be lead through the dance following like an obedient partner. Step by step, the dance. It is only by following, not leading, that we find the center, ourselves. No intent. No direction. No will. We follow, we relax, we yield, we soften, we comply, we find our true nature and define it in a lover's embrace as we stand on the shoes of our Father as He foot-steps us through Eternity.

I hang my limbs, rags upon a pole, and pose a Tai Chi posture. Is the form an external shape, a bronze statue? Or is the form a mirage, formed by the heat of the soul, compressed by a fevered spirit and released, a flower unfolding in the Sun, by inspiration. I see before me the dance of dying moths. They swirl upward like white ashes lifting on waves of heat.



As we begin with Tai Chi we stand in Wu Chi and perform the commencement. At first we do not understand. We hurry on through it, the stable horse stubbornly returning to the stable without regard for the commands of the rider. We are eager to experience the movement of Tai Chi and so we miss the essential truth, Tai Chi is stillness, in intent it is stillness, in purpose it is stillness, in reality it is stillness.

As we age in our training, if we are persistent we will discover the Wu Chi, the not doing, the stillness is the hidden gift, the secret, the essence of Tai Chi. The center where we become the still point upon which the world turns and everything touches us.

The Seed Sower, He spreads the seeds without regard for kind and delights in the surprise as varied shoots spring up. He rejoices in the kaleidoscope of color and shape. Move from your center and delight in the dance as you would the unfolding of a spring day with wind, sunlight, flowers and the impromptu serenade of birds. Tai Chi is such a thing!

I have never done my Tai Chi perfectly. In every practice I have erred. For a time this bothered me. No longer. When I play my Tai Chi I am always over stepping, turning my foot a little too far, reaching too far, reaching out a little too much, never perfect. When I play my Tai Chi I often lose myself in the flow and forget what comes next, embrace tiger, grasp the sparrows tail, slant fly? I recall the story of the Zen archery master who had never hit a bull's eye in his life. I guess like that Zen master I'm just not aiming for the center of the target. When the arrow flies it goes where it intends, when I release myself to Tai Chi I follow the arrow.

It is not the Tai Chi we dance, it is ourselves. It is not the form, it is what lies within us. What a wonderful mystery! The discovery of inner self through outer movement!

Tai Chi should be this, Tai Chi should be that, a stance is this way, not that, your weight is here, not there, your foot turned this way, not that. Who wrote these stone tablet prescriptions? Is life so predictable?

Do we always know what comes next, the next move, the next step? Art is CREATING! Life is unpredictable. We sit before the canvas and who knows what will materialize? We sit before the blank paper and who knows what words will flow?

We breathe, and air from the Arctic, the Amazon, Australia, and Asia fills our lungs and enters our blood to infuse our cells. We seek to create and we are inspired by symbols, metaphors, similes and parables. Matter is energy, energy forms matter, the two constantly interchange one becoming the other. We are butterflies, eagles, moths, we are happy, sad, serious, silly, intense, frivolous, we are strong, weak, stoic, fragile, we are female and feminine, female and masculine, male and feminine and female and masculine. That which is solid is impermanent, immaterial, invisible. That which lives has form, life and force. Our religion is law and mystery. Our life becomes death becomes endless life. What then? Live as if life is change. Dance the Tai Chi as change.

My eyes alone do not see the Tai Chi form, rather my eyes, my pores, my senses, my inner mind sees the dancing spirit celebrating life. In the highest heaven, nearest to the Throne of God the sweetest music is sung by love struck Angels in the Choir of Light. How can we not dance to the music?



A Garden Everlasting

The way of the martial arts is the way of the spirit.

Have you heard the call? What call you ask? The call of the Eternal spirit echoing in the ruby chambers of your heart and leading you to truth.

Make of your life a quest, a spiritual quest. Search far and wide for the deeper truths.

Meditate! Pray! Strengthen your mind, train and command your body, transform your spirit. Do not be dissuaded by foolishness, do not be diverted by material pursuits or desire. Resist! Arise! Struggle!

The foolish have usurped the swords of valor and courage and laid claim to the warrior craft, but the heart of error can never prevail. Stand strong within your circle, Red Lions, Black Dragons are we! Have you not heard that the poor shall inherit?



Test yourself by the two edged sword of heaven and earth for you are the physical manifestation of the divine.

Your soul is both of heaven and earth and has two natures. Nourish one side and withhold from the other for you cannot feed both at the same time. Train your higher self and lovingly bury your lower self in its temporal grave.



What is Tai Chi?
Ask your heart!
What is Tai Chi?
Draw a circle and within its center place yourself!
What is Tai Chi?
The school of your soul!
What is Tai Chi?
Ask God!

Tai Chi, so many words to describe universal love.

Learn from all the good spirits, saints, and God. Listen to the mystic voice as it warbles its celestial song and pulls your heart strings.

I think courage and I become courage. I think unity and I become one. I think love and I become all love.

I stand in my circle and whirling clouds of energy envelope me. I am a peaceful warrior! You ask, where is your school? My reply, it is everywhere!

My body is so powerful! It cries for life! Every cell throbs with a vibrating power of desire. Eat! Drink! Pleasure! But wait! This power, this desire, this body is the servant of the soul. Born to carry the soul the long road, serving its every need and shaping its divine image like wind cutting sandstone.

Infuse your Tai Chi deeply within your body with every breath you take. Every cell must know its true master.

Fix your mind upon what is good.
Hold it.
Relax your body.
Release it.
Achieve silence.
Merge with it.
Submit to the divine.
Surrender to it.



Know that what you wish to be you can be by acting now as if you are that way. Be it.
Feel the energy of the universe around you. Join with it.
Do not allow yourself to be turned from the goal. Stay with it.
Divine awareness will infuse you. Listen to it.

A dead end is only a single step from God's gate.

Sitting still I release all contending thoughts, my dancing mind comes to rest, like a leaf dropped by the wind. Breath moves from my pores and mingles with the wind. I become a melody strangely haunting, a tune hummed by God, His Song along the Path.

Shaped by God, stand firmly, immovable.
Created by God, shine brightly with virtue.
Loved by God. be fearless, deathless.
Guided by God, serve and sacrifice.



The true man and the true woman yield their child and their grief to the sweet embrace of God and seek their spiritual essence in harmony with a greater plan. The time has passed for our days as children; we must yield up our suffering for our sister's suffering, our hunger for our brother's hunger, and our pain for our friend's pain. So much to do within such fleeting time.

Like the rise and fall of your bosom the Universe moves. Like the in and out breath of the sleeping infant the Universe moves. The breath of life is in all things. Listen! Can you hear the flow? Perhaps you are breathing to the rhythm of life. Perhaps you breathe a part of it and it breathes all of you. Perhaps this is oneness. To move with breath is to move in harmony.

God speaks in whispered breath in the morning. Early before the world bursts into activity, God is there, waiting. Awaken! Arise! Breathe! Speak your heart and listen for the answer, patiently. Quietly begin your dance with the music of dawn. This is the secret of happiness.

Spirit is of two kinds, the spirit of life that animates cells and organs and the greater Spirit which conveys us to our other life. Join with the Great Spirit and set yourself free, do this through true Tai Chi, the energy of the living path.

What a painful turmoil is life! How corrupt and ignoble is mankind at this time, our time for life! Within your heart is a seed awaiting the divine light to bring it into growth and to bloom. Just as the brilliant flower springs from the mud, the beauty of your heart can burst forth from the mire of this earthly life.

Fix your gaze on the Source and seek God in all things. True life is freedom from desire and true peace is clearness of mind. Overcome your base desires and defeat the mind of agitation.

Free yourself of false forms and embrace the true form. Eschew lawlessness and obey the laws. Purify your heart, discipline your mind and body. Focus your attention on the Way and stick steadfastly to the Path. This Way is like your veins and the life blood within them. If your blood does not flow within, you die, if you do not move upon the Path, you perish. You either grow or you wither, you either advance or you retreat. Upon the Way there is no standing in one place; only moving forward or backward, either life or death. What choice have you made?

I stand within my circle, my spirit light surrounds me and blends with the ever present divine light. Oneness. I stand firm, my roots run deep. I move in all directions lifted by love guided by the hand of God. I use the universal strength of Yin and Yang and the powers of the five elements, it is my right!



Virtue overcomes all evil like light melts the darkness.

I bow to all the Great Teachers of God, manifestations of His Light and Spirit. My love to Jesus who guided and protected me always, even to the end. I love Him as a child loves. My love to all the Teachers of God who bring goodness to mankind and who sit as one family and as one voice to all peoples of earth!

You are a vibration, a word, a sound.
You are an image, a mirror, a light.
You are water, fire, heaven and earth, spirit and flesh.
You are a drop, a river, an ocean.
You are oneness.

Then how different are you from heaven and earth?

Understand your heart through the melody of water, the roar of fire, the vastness of the sky, and the beauty of the earth. Understand unity and know yourself. I stand, somewhere, holding firmly my spear. My strength suffuses its shaft, its razor edges cut away foolishness and sham, its point pierces to the heart. Stand in your circle and cry out to God. All the universe will surround you with love and peace.

Where am I? Somewhere! Perhaps on the Bridge of Heaven, between time and space, where heaven and earth, divine and man, meet in the twilight.

In the center I am fire and water, I am moving out and moving in, I am spinning and I am still. On the left I move away and on the right I move toward, on one side I repel and on the other I receive. From the top I am pulled up and from the bottom I am lifted. Nothing happens but the actions are unlimited, the variations countless. I am burned in fire and cooled by water, and I am saved.



I am man, I am woman. I am chi, I am energy. I am you and you are me.

Left gives to right and right gives to left. To be pushed is to receive and to receive is to give.

My higher self strives to live and my lower self strives to live, both cannot! One must grow and one must wither, one must brighten and one must dim. To sacrifice the higher for the lower is death. To use the lower for the higher is life, like burning wood for light. The body is the tool of the higher self like the womb nourishes the child.



Invite me not to your mansion,
I have no need for wealth.
Invite me not to your chambers,
I have little need for rest.
Invite me not to your table,
my need for food is spare.
Invite me not to your couch,
I have no need for talk.
You wish to be my companion,
and my truest Friend?
Then join me on the battlefield
and hoist the flag of peace!

Dawn to dawn, day to day seek to forge the sword of your soul in the heat and cold of constant training. Strive to polish the blade to a mirror like finish with the burnish of daily life. When you feel dull and blunted return to your center, train harder, and raise a mighty cry to summon divine assistance to your aid.

Gird up your loins, and place upon your fingers your burial rings! The limbs of the strong and the meek shall quake and fear, and trembling shall seize them all. Now is the time of calamity. Enter then the fortress and set the torch alight.

My sword and spear are symbols of my power and strength, of my resolve and determination to stand firm, to hold my ground and never waver from my duty or my destiny.

God has given me a life and asked that I live it well! Then I choose to live my life as a peaceful warrior serving in the world and bringing understanding to others in accordance with the will of God.

When I face the enemy his familiar face startles me. Although surrounded on all sides, I know victory will come. When my training fails me I embrace the All-Embracing and do not fall.

With faith in God there is no need to draw your sword.
With knowledge of God there is nothing to be learned.
With the love of God the impossible is child's play.

I balance myself between two worlds; one of form and one of formlessness. In one I obey by will, in the other I surrender to faith. In which is there greater strength, the noblest action?



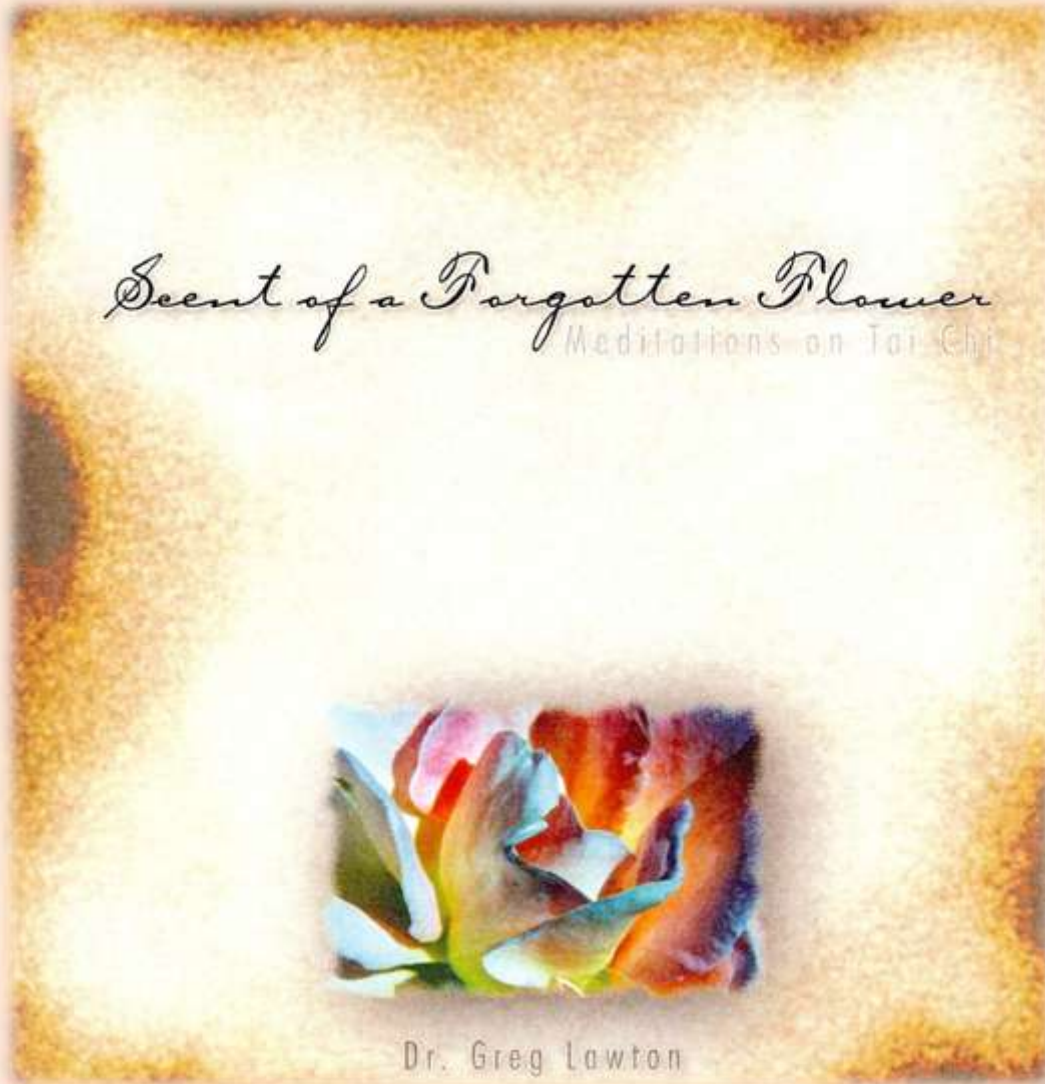
When I cannot sit in silence I resort to love. When I cannot feel love I try sorrow. When all fails I surrender my heart and will and pray for grace. It falls upon me like a gentle rain in the sun and I rejoice!

I have danced my Tai Chi by the ocean and heard the songs of angels. My faltering voice joined in the melody of sacred sounds, singing forth and echoing the song of creation. The sweet vibration of life.

I cry out, why is this path so difficult? Why is this world so ugly and why does hatred prevail? Why do so few tread the straight path and why do so many fail? The answer resounds, “The dawn is coming, its spreading light is reaching out to end this darkness and to illumine every corner of the world.” The divine Sun must rise again and fill the earth with love. As the first glimmers of this light appear we must mirror this radiance into the hearts of others so that they will awaken from their death-like sleep.



...and foolishly I asked, “How will I know when I am a master?”, and the answer came, “When you have mastered all aspects of your life as a man, a husband, and a father, as a citizen, and in all things as a true servant of humanity. Then will you be a master.”



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