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TAOIST SEXUAL MEDITATION



Connecting Love, Energy and Spirit

BRUCE FRANTZIS

AUTHOR OF **TAO OF LETTING GO**

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TAOIST SEXUAL MEDITATION

Connecting Love, Energy and Spirit

BRUCE FRANTZIS



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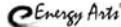
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This book is dedicated to yin and yang—woman and man—
and what they can achieve together in sexual union.

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Author's Introduction

I was a nineteen-year-old hotshot martial arts champion. It was the 1960s, and I had managed to get myself introduced to the legendary tai chi, hsing-i and bagua master Wang Shu Jin. Amazingly, he was willing to take me on as a student. On a hot and humid afternoon, we were sitting together in his living room in Taichung, Taiwan. Bald-headed, big-bellied, with arms and legs like tree-trunks, the old man, speaking in Chinese, proceeded to lay into me. “I can fight better than you. I can eat more than you,” and then, hitting me way below the belt, at least metaphorically, he added, “and I can fuck better than you. There’s more to being strong than youth. It’s all to do with how much qi you have.”

Later, in the middle of sparring practice, Wang took the idea further: “You look like a sexually high-spirited young man,” he said, “but do you really know how to do it?” I didn’t like where the conversation was going. Here was a man in his sixties, carrying three hundred pounds on a 5 foot 8 inch, rotund frame—not the body type you might commonly associate with the buff, macho sexuality paraded about in the West. Who was he to challenge my youthful enthusiasm and what I thought of as natural prowess?

In fact, I knew full well who he was—one of the best fighters in all of China. When I realized that his intent was not to insult me but to open my mind, I began to get curious about what he might know. I’d already experienced the remarkable power of Master Wang’s qi firsthand when he had first invited me to spar with him. Even though I had black belts in judo, karate, jujitsu and aikido, I couldn’t get near him. When he asked me to punch him in the gut as hard as I could, he bounced me right off his big belly like a rubber ball. As



Photo by the author

The late Wang Shu Jin demonstrates standing qigong in a park in Taichung, Taiwan.

a martial artist, he was matchless. That much was abundantly clear. Equally remarkable were his older students, some in their sixties and seventies, including women, who could spar with me and hold their own. Without a doubt, Wang was an extraordinary teacher, skilled at teaching people how to use qi.

Although he never discussed the matter with me directly, I also knew that the venerable Master Wang lived with nine women, only one of whom was his servant and housekeeper. The other eight, loosely speaking, were his concubines. Clearly there was something about the old man that made them want to stay with him.

Wang talked to me about a secret Taoist group with a comprehensive knowledge of sex and meditation far beyond what I could imagine. He gave me a personal introduction to this group that trained adepts to become Taoist priests.

TAOIST PRIESTHOOD TRAINING

Although I had practiced Zen Buddhist meditation in my youth, my primary interest was in experiencing the world rather than retreating from it. I grew up in New York City, where the word “priest” evokes strong images: the black and white collar, the man at the altar with an offering raised overhead. Like most of my generation, I associated priests with the Catholic Church, the tight confines of a confessional and vows of celibacy. I did not in any way aspire to become a priest. In fact, I wasn’t even interested in spirituality at that point in my life. As a martial artist and a healthy, sexually-active young man, celibacy was the furthest thing from my mind.

Wang, to my astonishment, completely demolished my cultural stereotypes. I was ushered into a world where priests were not encouraged to renounce their sexual nature—quite the opposite.

Through Master Wang’s personal introduction to this Taoist community, I quickly came to realize that my youthful enthusiasm for sex was largely an automatic, unconscious activity, driven by instinct. As a lover, I was on autopilot, unaware and out of touch, not only with whoever was my partner, but also with my own body, mind and heart. I could not yet recognize that sexual attraction and fulfillment was beyond looks, personality and thinking. Rather sexual joy and satisfaction were determined by how well the invisible energy flowed between lovers and on how many levels those energetic flows were compatible (for more on this subject, see Chapter 6). I was completely oblivious to the multidimensional experience everyone can access by consciously engaging sexuality.

Moreover, this unconsciousness and almost naïve lack of awareness of my inner Being also, at the time, extended into my personal relationships. Perhaps this more

than anything else persuaded me to embark on a seven-year course of study to be ordained as a Taoist priest.

The word “priest” is used completely differently in the East than in the West. In China, training to be a *tao shi* (literally “spiritual teacher,” the Taoist word for “priest”), involves total immersion in multiple Taoist energy arts. A *tao shi* is, first and foremost, a master of internal energy or qi. At each stage of development, an initiate is required to undergo practical, in-depth training, during which he or she must embody and demonstrate the ability to work with qi within his or her body and later with the qi of others. An elaborate sequence of spiritual rituals and vows is involved.

The course of study, utterly foreign in the West, includes a complex array of subjects:

1. Comprehension of the classic Taoist texts, especially the *I Ching*, which is studied in depth, much as a Christian studies the Bible.
2. Qigong (energy work) for mastering the energy circuits and flows in the body and becoming healthy.
3. Meditation methods for health and vitality, releasing karma, and developing psychic capacities to move toward enlightenment and the Tao.
4. Healing arts such as herbs, acupuncture and my particular specialty, *qigong tui na* (bodywork that uses both physical and qi techniques), one of the eight branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine.
5. Spiritual martial arts—tai chi, hsing-i and bagua, with their physical, martial, psychic and healing skills, and then the entire meditation process that leads toward the Tao.
6. Performing or assisting with exorcisms.
7. Spiritual midwifery—ushering sentient beings into the world by working with women during pregnancy and delivery, to enable the soul to fully enter in the healthiest possible spiritual condition.
8. Death and dying practices—to guide people through the pre-dying process and help them cross over to the other side—and, if appropriate, teach them what happens and what to do when consciousness permanently leaves the body.
9. Rites and rituals that minister to the spiritual needs of the community.
10. All aspects of sexuality, from improving relationships to resolving physical, mental, emotional and spiritual blockages, and opening the door to higher levels of consciousness through solo and sexual meditation practices.

In this particular Taoist priesthood group, an initiate was required to engage in sex as a vehicle for personal transformation. This particular training was not exclusively for men; women were also allowed to train as a *tao shi*. Understanding sexual energy and all that goes with it was a vital part of the training. In fact, the vows of the *tao shi* placed initiates under a mandate to be sexual in many circumstances even when they felt disinclined.

This training also involved total secrecy. The methods were to be shared only with initiates of an exclusive, nonpublic group. Outside my group of initiates, I was not permitted to mention my membership in the group or any of my activities to anyone, including my family and closest friends, sexual or not. Likewise, I was never allowed to elaborate what transpired in the priesthood except in the broadest terms.

It was considered a great honor and privilege to gain access to this sacred knowledge. Receiving the teachings generated an unprecedented level of personal responsibility, because the subject matter dealt with the core of each person's inner life. The teachings were not a matter for casual consideration or gossip. Only after I became ordained was I able to share the Taoist work, not to fulfill anyone's idle curiosity, but only to help alleviate deeper human and spiritual needs.

It was while training to become a *tao shi* that I learned the depth of knowledge that the Taoists hold about sexuality. Here in the West, it was the advent of birth control that sparked the free-love movement. Contrast this with ancient Taoist communities, which didn't need modern medicine and "the pill" to prevent pregnancy. Having perfected the techniques of semen retention, the Taoists have had reliable birth control for thousands of years. That's two thousand years of uninterrupted sexual exploration. Far from a fad or new innovation, Taoist sexual qigong and sexual meditation is grounded within one of the world's great religious traditions.

Before I lead you further into this unusual and fascinating realm, I want to offer an important point of clarification. I want to state, right here at the start, that while the Taoists may appear unrestrained in sexual matters, the behavior prescribed for priesthood training does not involve selfish indulgence or sexual exploitation at all. Its primary purpose is spiritual acceleration and advancement with consenting partners. An exalted understanding of human sexuality is what makes this possible.

LIU HUNG CHIEH AND THE TAOIST WATER TRADITION

After seven years of priesthood training, studying a wide range of energy practices, including martial arts, qigong, meditation and healing modalities with Wang



Photo by Caroline Frantzis

The author was a disciple of the late Taoist Lineage Master Liu Hung Chieh, of Beijing, China.

Shu Jin and other masters, I met Liu Hung Chieh. He was a master of a different Taoist lineage who was considered a Spiritual Immortal, or what is often termed “a fully realized Being.”

With the exception of one Chinese student, Liu had not been teaching, much less taking on new students, since the Communists rose to power in 1949. However, shortly before we met, he had a prophetic dream in which a big foreigner arrived at his doorstep to study with him. Because of this dream and a personal letter of introduction I had brought with me, Liu agreed to take me on as a student.

Just as in Tibetan Buddhism, within the Taoist arts, a lineage is a line of teaching that runs from one master through successive generations of worthy students, who

become masters in their own right and pass on the knowledge. As Sogyal Rinpoche writes in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*:¹

“Lineage serves as a crucial safeguard: It maintains the authenticity and purity of the teaching...It is not a question of preserving some fossilized ritualistic knowledge, but of transmitting from heart to heart, from mind to mind, an essential and living wisdom and its skillful and powerful methods.”

Liu would fully teach me yet another Taoist tradition unknown in the West—the Water method, based on two classic Taoist texts, the *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi, who is also known as Lao Tse or Lao Tzu (see Appendix D, “The Spelling of Chinese Words in English”) and the *I Ching*. Liu would also complete my education in the Fire methods of Taoism that I had learned during my Taoist priesthood training and from other masters.

Liu Hung Chieh took my learning to extraordinary levels, for which I have deep gratitude. From Liu I received authentic lineages in bagua, tai chi and hsing-i (the three internal martial arts of China), as well as in qigong and Taoist meditation. One of the responsibilities of my lineage was to teach and carry the knowledge forward to this and future generations, if I so chose.

I have written this book for the same reason as my previous ones—to ensure that even if I should die tomorrow, important parts of the Taoist lineage to which I belong will not be lost but instead will be available to people in the West. My aim is for this profoundly transformative material to continue to benefit future generations over multiple lifetimes.

SEXUAL MEDITATION: THE WAY OF LOVE, ENERGY AND SPIRIT

Taoism has a well-worn phrase, “If there is the real, then there is the false.” In this book I have attempted to write only about the “real,” as my lineage and personal sense of integrity require. This book introduces the Taoist view on sexual meditation as a direct method to the highest attainments of Eastern spirituality. More than just another sex manual, it is an entry point into the largely untapped potential of human sexuality.

Sexual energy is the single most powerful, natural internal force that is readily available to a human being to foster his or her spiritual development. For thousands of years, Taoists have harnessed that supercharged energy using precise and very pragmatic methods. By introducing these multidimensional methods, I hope to

1. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (New York: Harper, San Francisco, 1994), 128.

help people become comfortable talking about sex and engaging in it, a subject that is both natural and profound. Then couples can begin to see and actualize the dormant possibilities sex offers as a method to reach their highest human and spiritual potentials.

Becoming a better lover is not just about physical techniques. It is mostly about becoming energetically aware of and sensitive to increasingly deeper dimensions within you and your partner. As this occurs, sex not only becomes increasingly pleasurable and emotionally satisfying, but it also becomes a method to broaden intimacy between you and your partner, both in the bedroom and in your day-to-day relationship. Each chapter explores the context and theory of sex from the Taoist tradition. As you move through the book, you may be surprised by Taoism's pragmatic approaches to solving some of the sexual hang-ups and conditioning that get in the way not only of pleasure but also of having a relaxed and satisfying relationship with your partner. You may also be intrigued by the Taoist view of morality in the larger context of karma and of sexuality as a means to achieve enlightenment.

Learning Taoist sexual practices is a multilevel process. The beginning level can be called "ordinary sex" or "the way of love." The intermediate level is what Taoists refer to as "sexual qigong" or "the way of energy." This involves intentional engagement with the subtle energy dimension of sexuality. The advanced level is "sexual meditation" or "the way of Spirit," an accelerated path to full enlightenment. Most of what Westerners have come to know as "Tantra," in Taoism falls under the category of energy sex or sexual qigong rather than sexual meditation.

Although the practices in this book are not necessarily easy, they are not too difficult to consider trying, even if certain aspects may seem way out of your reach. Many normal human beings, just like you, have successfully engaged in these methods for millennia. Most began working with ordinary sex and progressed step-by-step over time. Rather than thinking sexual qigong and meditation were impossible, they adopted the attitude that "if others have done it, I, too, may get there in time." They recognized that "not yet" is quite different from "never" or "impossible."

According to an old Taoist saying, "If time is limited, don't ask a master whys or wherefores. Rather, ask how to do what is being proposed." In other words, focus on the practices that give you the direct experience rather than only explanations. Only by doing what is suggested can you discover what the practice is meant to reveal. To this purpose, the sexual practices in this book are sequentially numbered to give you the ideal order in which to experiment with the material. Nevertheless, I leave it to your judgment to decide how to proceed.

Many specific exercises will provide you with an understanding of Taoist sexual arts and how to learn them. Each exercise is categorized according to its level of practice:



Ordinary sex, symbolized by the Chinese character *jing* (sperm/ovary generative energy that governs the physical body).



Energy sex or sexual qigong, represented by the Chinese word *qi* (vital energy, including thoughts, emotions and psychic energy).



Spiritual sex or sexual meditation, denoted by the Chinese character *shen* (Spirit or karmic and essence energy).

The techniques within these practice sections form the essence of the book. Each new level includes methods of the previous ones. In order to reach the higher levels of practice, some degree of skill and competence at the earlier levels is required. In the transition phase between two levels, the methods tend to mix and match before they become more complete and stable at the next level.

Although ordinary Taoist sexual practices can be learned by almost everyone, this may not be the case for advanced methods of sexual qigong and meditation. These require a higher level of commitment to learn the subtle energy skills that provide a pathway to success. The necessary foundation is commonly gained in such preliminary practices as qigong, tai chi and tai chi push hands, explained in more detail in Chapter 10. For Taoist sexual meditation work, it is necessary to have had significant training and practice in both the Taoist methods of meditation and the energetic techniques of *neigong*, the Taoist art and science of how to consciously move energy through the body, which consists of sixteen components (see Chapter 10, “The Art and Science of Neigong”).

The Taoist Water tradition is not rigid, however, and fully recognizes that readers are likely to experiment with methods from different levels to satisfy their natural curiosity. Nonetheless, it must be stated that reading about Taoist sexual practices from a book does not have the same power or subtlety as learning under the guidance of an experienced master. It does, however, allow for a worthwhile start, as actual masters of this material are difficult to find. At the very least, it may inspire you to learn some of the other energy practices, such as qigong, that can not only dramatically improve your sex life but also help you become extremely healthy and vibrant.

THE RELEVANCE OF TAOISM AND SEXUAL MEDITATION TO MODERN LIFE

This book introduces Taoist spirituality through the lens of Taoist sexuality, a subject little known about, much less taught. Developing and strengthening life-force energy through sexuality is one of the Taoist paths toward spiritual awakening.

During the final years of my Taoist studies in Beijing, I once asked Liu Hung Chieh why he didn't teach more people meditation. His answer was, "Not many want to learn." Today, Liu's words reach across to Eastern and Western cultures that are deeply mired in a malaise of anxieties and fears. Modern life for many feels out of balance and continually stressful. Few people set aside the time for a regular spiritual practice, meditation or otherwise.

For many couples, sex has become just another task or chore for which they can't seem to find the time or energy.

Imagine how much better the world would be if everyone was having thoroughly satisfying sex. In their daily lives, both inside and outside the bedroom, people would feel happier and more relaxed, as well as less prone to negative emotions such as depression, fear and anger.

Prolonged, sustained commitment to a spiritual path is never easy. However, Taoist sexual practices can allow you and your partner to work together and gain accelerated access to that path. Using Taoist meditation, as you release that which energetically binds you, pure states of awareness, joy and love can begin to arise naturally. This becomes your new baseline. The goal is to explore who you are at the level of your soul or Being.

This book gives you a systematic way to improve the quality of your lovemaking on a variety of different levels, and, if you so choose, to begin working toward becoming more spiritually awake. More fulfilling sex is just a tiny fraction of what Taoism, one of the world's great religious traditions, has to offer. Its potent, transformative techniques can benefit you in all kinds of ways, from the everyday to the esoteric.

I wish you well on your journey towards the Tao.

Bruce Frantzis
Marin County, California
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