

Nurture Life, Discover Who You Are.

By Christina J Barea, DP, MMQ
For QiDao (soon to be YangSheng)

Listening deeply to the quiet sound of leaves unfolding at Spring I breathe in and embody the miracle manifested in each and every tree. Budding flowers drink the energy of the earth to create vibrant colors and seductive fragrances which capture the senses. Each tiny flower blossoms into a canvas for birds, bees and man to enjoy never compromising its beauty despite the struggle to break free from the tight skin of its seed or the pounding drops of rain or beating rays of the sun. How incredible is nature that over and over renews its splendor in all the colors of the rainbow, in so many shapes and sizes in perfect harmony with the totality of 3 Treasures. The flower does not question its purpose nor does it contend with the leaves, it does only what it can do- be a flower. And in the uncomplicated presence of this flowering tree the essence of *yangsheng* is simply stated- nurture your treasures and live life to your fullest potential. It seems to me that we should be like the flower and that *yangsheng* (*life nurturing*) is the way to becoming like the flower. Like the flower, we should be who we are, embracing our essence, honoring our roots yet living to our fullest potential; And that, like the flower, when we nurture life, all of it, we allow our true nature to blossom and manifest all the colors of the rainbow.

For most of mankind however, this simple instruction is defiantly evasive. Just as the sages have known for centuries, the dao of *wuwei* and ultimate internal peace is not easy to attain. So, how do we discover our essence, what does our “fullest potential” look like, and how do we apply the simple wisdom of *yangsheng*? To discover our own unique manifestation we must create deep awareness to all aspects of our being from jing to qi to shen. In this regard *yangsheng* means understanding how our body (including the energetic) is structured and how it works, and upon reaching this comprehension it means making choices that support the healthy evolution of your being rather than being caught in the trap of unaware drifting. Our problem is that, unlike the flower, we have the capacity to make choices bringing into our lives the thousands or millions of times more

possibilities. Yet, unfortunately, the abundance of choices does not always imply a better life or better health.

The key to effectively practicing *yangsheng* and making informed choices is to understand what our true nature is. Daoist scripture teaches us that we are small beams of light emanating from a Divine source manifested into a human body, and so at our essence we are Divine beings having a human experience. The scriptures also teach us about the *wuxing* (5 lights) which escort the soul into this plane upon conception, are part of our Divine nature and which carry the virtues and emotions that are a deep part of our sensorial experiences. Scripture also teaches us that shen guides the qi which in turn guides the jing. Together, these basic tenets of Daoism provide profound insight into the importance of *yangsheng*. To practice “nurturing life” then becomes a deep practice in awareness, mindfulness and discipline for the purpose of discovering what truly lies in our essence and what we can accomplish when absolutely nothing lies in the way of us manifesting our Divine nature. This practice includes awareness on all levels of our being, from taking care of our physical body, to being mindful of our emotions, and even cultivating our spiritual path.

However, within the gift of life we are not automatically conferred the ability to do or be all things at the same time, the same way an orchid cannot be a daisy, and that despite our common root in divinity we are still unique in our own special way. Understanding our essence allows us to discover what we can truly manifest as effortlessly as *wuwei*. And as previously mentioned the availability of millions of choices only makes this deep internal awareness somewhat more challenging. And so the in the spirit of the taiji the practice of *yangsheng* is both a way of cultivating great health as well as a practice in self-discovery. Ultimately the greatest gift conferred in *yangsheng* is peace, harmony and the ability to radiate qi with the intense beauty of the flowers in spring and becoming as unique as the most precious flower.