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From: Chip Ellis

Subject: Whole Lotta Shakin Goin On

Many of you may have seen or experienced a shaking sensation during practice or exhibitions which generate and use a lot of energy. I have a pet theory about this.

The shaking usually shows in the hands, although it occasionally manifests itself in other parts of the body. I think the hands indicate one thing, and the rest of the body something else.

First the hands.

They vibrate with a frequency around 120 to 360 cycles per second. The amplitude is generally small (less than 1/2 inch), although I have seen some examples of larger amplitudes (several inches). The vibration occurs at the end of a move, for example a push. It is not present until the practitioner extends out his energy into the hand. So it is not a general continual shaking, but one that happens only at the end of a move.

I'm not talking about the shaking that you can fake by a conscious pulsing effort. This can often be seen in low quality demonstrations. Rather I'm talking about a vibration that appears to happen on its own.

My theory is that the vibration is indeed a manifestation of energy. But that the shaking happens when the energy path becomes overloaded. Sort of like pulsing water at too high a pressure through a pipe. So the shaking can arise under several conditions: 1) Pulsing a large or small amount of energy through a small channel, or 2) pulsing a large amount of energy through a large channel. The vibration comes about when the channel cannot support the amplitude of the energy pulses.

I think that if you see someone demonstrate a set and his hands are vibrating you still don't know if he is good or not. The shaking could be because he is nervous and tight, thus constricting the channel to the point where whatever energy he has causes an overload. Or he could have lots of energy and be quite relaxed, therefore have no shaking because the channel can easily handle the load. Or he could have nice open channels with lots of capacity, but be superman and be able to overload them with incredible power. It's hard to say based on the shaking alone.

But it's kind of fun to play with the phenomenon. I notice it happens to me when I am demonstrating before a large group of strangers and also after I have been practicing particularly vigorously. I don't know, maybe I'm just spastic.

I have also seen it in a number of martial artists who impressed me with their gong fu. So I think there is something there.

As to the body shaking, that is another story.

I think when the body shakes it is an indication of tightness. I suppose you could argue that as the body and central energy expands it could cause the same effect as in the hands. But all the people I have seen with significant body shakes have been either tight or weak. I have yet to see a high frequency body shake from someone who seems to have a lot of energy.

In the neijia literature there is reference to a vibrating palm technique. I wonder, is the hand vibration I have discussed above an example of this technique?

Aloha,

Chip Ellis