

Tao Culture and Health

Huaizong Li *
Institute of Taoism and Religious Culture
Sichuan University
Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China
xuemu@163.com

Abstract—People's life and health issues have been a topic of great concern to Chinese people since ancient times. Especially in Taoism and Taoist culture, they pursue longevity through various means, and thus achieve the goal of immortality. How to learn experiences and inspirations that are beneficial to physical and mental health from the traditional Taoism and Taoist cultures, and to use it to guide and apply to the daily life of the public is the concern of this article.

Keywords—Tao culture, Health, Huang-tzu

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, especially since the reform and opening-up, China's health sector has made remarkable achievements in its reform and development. The urban and rural environment has improved significantly, the nationwide fitness campaign has flourished, the medical and health service system has become increasingly sound, and the people's health and physical quality have continued to improve. At the same time, industrialization, urbanization, population aging, the generalization of diseases, ecological environment and lifestyle changes have brought a series of new challenges to the maintenance and promotion of people's health. The overall supply of health services is growing and demand is growing. The contradiction is still outstanding. The coordination between the development of the health field and economic and social development needs to be strengthened. It is necessary to solve the major and long-term problems of relationship health from the national strategic level. Promoting the construction of a healthy China is an important foundation for building a well-off society in an all-round way and basically realizing socialist modernization. It is a national strategy for comprehensively improving the health quality of the Chinese nation, achieving people's health and coordinated economic and social development, and actively participating in global health governance and fulfilling 2030. Major initiatives on the international commitments of the Sustainable Development Agenda. China will achieve the following goals by 2030: the people's health level will continue to improve and their physical fitness will be significantly enhanced. In 2030, the average life expectancy will reach 79.0 years, and the per capita health expectancy will increase significantly. By 2050, build a healthy country that is compatible with a socialist modern country. [1]

A. Improvement of Chinese People's health level is facing a big challenge.

Let's take a look at the following sets of data on Chinese health:

Overview of Chinese health huge data: China has a population of about 160-170 million people with hypertension, more than 100 million people with high blood lipids, more than 100 million people with diabetes, 70-200 million people with overweight or obesity, 160 million people with dyslipidemia and 120 million people with fatty liver. One person gets cancer every 30 seconds, and one person gets diabetes every 30 seconds. Every 30 seconds, at least one person dies of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases. [1]

All kinds of diseases present a trend of appearing on younger ages: 22% of middle-aged people in China die of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases; 70% of them are at risk of death from overwork; 76% of white-collar workers are subhealthy; nearly 60% of white-collar workers are overworked, and less than 3% of them are truly healthy; young and middle-aged women are prone to gynecological and cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases; young and middle-aged men face sudden death, overwork and cancer. Questions: Between 2013 and 2014, people aged 35 to 46 died of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, 22 percent in China and 12 percent in the United States. The report on talent development of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences points out that 70% of them are at risk of death from overwork. If Chinese intellectuals do not pay attention to adjusting their sub-health, 2/3 of them will die of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases in the near future. [1]

Chinese youth health huge data: Breakfast behavior survey of primary and secondary school students in 7 cities in China showed that 80% of the students had poor nutritional quality and did not meet the national standard; the incidence of adolescent anemia reached 38%; the incidence of fatty liver in obese children was 40-50%; and the incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus increased 11-33 times in 20 years. The Ministry of Education's National Surveillance Report on Students'Physical Health in 2013 shows that the myopia rate of primary school students is 32.5%, that of junior middle school students is 59.4%, that of senior high school students is 77.3% and that of college students is 80%; that of senior high school graduates in coastal cities is 85%, and that of high myopia is increasing rapidly. According to a survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, the protein intake of 270 million Chinese college students is only 65% of the standard. Iron, calcium and zinc are seriously inadequate, vitamin A intake is only 15% of the standard. [2]

Chinese elderly health huge data: In 2020, China entered a critical stage of aging. Osteoporosis has jumped to the seventh

most common and frequently-occurring disease; the prevalence rate of people over 60 years old is 56%, and the incidence rate of women is 60-70%. The incidence of fracture is close to one-third, and the annual medical cost is estimated to be 15 billion RMB according to the most conservative. The number of dementia patients in the world has reached 24 million with an average increase of one per 7 seconds. Alzheimer's disease in China accounts for about one fourth of the world's total cases, with an average annual increase of 300,000 new cases. The per capita GDP of developed countries is between 5000 and 8000 US dollars when they are aging, and that of China is between 1000 US dollars in 2003. Aging process: 115 years in France; 85 years in Switzerland; 80 years in Britain; 60 years in the United States; 18 years in China. [2]

From the above data, we can see that the overall health status of the Chinese people is not optimistic. To achieve the goals of 2030 and 2050 in the Outline, we need to achieve various factors, and there is still much work to be done.

B. The Actual Conditions of China's Health.

At present, China still faces many problems: unbalanced distribution of medical and health resources, poor medical and health conditions in rural areas and remote areas; imperfect reform in the field of medical and health care, difficult and expensive medical treatment; weak awareness of health care, many groups do not pay attention to health care, resulting in more occurrence of diseases, especially in young and middle-aged groups; with the rapid pace of social life, many people ignore the concern for health; simply relying on Western medicine treatment is not enough to thoroughly improve the health and nutrition of the Chinese people and other issues. There are many such things so we don't give examples one by one. Therefore, in view of all kinds of difficulties, we should and can find out from Chinese traditional culture, especially Taoist culture, the wisdom and methods of health preservation that are convenient and suitable for the general public of China at present. By combining traditional Taoist culture, traditional Chinese medicine culture theory and modern medicine, it is easier to achieve the goal of "healthy China"

II. THE HEALTH CONNOTATION OF CHINESE TAOISM CULTURE

A. Attach Importance to People and Their Health.

Chinese traditional culture has always attached importance to "people", because it realized that culture and civilization are created by people and ultimately for people. Zhouyi Xiangzhuan says: A gentleman should know how to follow natural laws and understand tolerance. A gentle man is still a human; a man try to be strong also need a good health [3]. Taoist cultural tradition pays more attention to human beings, and "harmony between man and nature" [4] raises or equates human status to heaven. For the wise man in ancient times, the first thing is to preserve themselves, improve themselves and then help others. Therefore, the traditional culture of ancient Taoism in China has always attached great importance to the characteristics of "people", attaching importance to people will inevitably include the emphasis on physical and mental health and life and other factors and connotations.

For ancient China, whether Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism or other figures, but all who know and paid attention to the "Tao" and paid attention to "Tao law of nature" (this "Tao" also includes the way of health and longevity) had longevity, because they know to follow nature, pay attention to health and followed "Rule by body and country". Zhang Sanfeng, the famous Taoist figure, lived 212 years on textual research. Li Qingyun (1677-1933), a Chinese medicine scholar and martial artist, lived 256 years in the world. When he was 200 years old, he often went to lectures everywhere, and he had been interviewed by many western scholars. The above examples show that learning from the Chinese traditional culture of various fitness, health experience, focus on self-cultivation is able to improve the overall quality of physical and mental health.

Chinese traditional Taoist culture attaches great importance to the development and perfection of human beings and the physical and mental health of human beings. Therefore, it has made contributions and invented the idea of health preservation. Confucianism and Buddhism both have related ideas spread throughout the world. Here Taoism is the most important. The focus of Taoism has never been away from people and has always attached importance to human life. Records of Tao Te Ching said: [5] Hold on to the main Tao, and all the people come and go; without hurting them, and peace and tranquility will come. Chuang-tzu Yangshengzhu recorded: If peace of mind and timely adaptation to the development and change of all things, sadness and joy can not invade the mind and body. [6] Huangdi Yinfujing expounds the idea that "human life is doomed by heaven, and if one wants to live in peace and order, one must imitate heaven first, and then be able to live in peace for a long time". [7]

All these reflect Taoism's idea of health preserving in Inner Dan. At the same time, Taoism's concern and emphasis on life and health is closely related to the famous ancient doctors, such as Hua Tuo, Zhang Zhongjing, Ge Hong, Tao Hongjing, Chao Yuan Fang, Sun Simiao and other medical scholars themselves are famous figures in Taoism. Medical classics related to Taoism, such as the Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic , Zhou Hou Bei Ji Fang (in 2015, Tu received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, whose content inspired her to discover new treatments for malaria with arteannuin. The themes of Tu's speech at the Karolinska School in Sweden were "The Discovery of Artemisinin: A Gift from Traditional Chinese Medicine to the World"), "Annotation of the Herbal Classics", "Nurturing Life, Syndromes of Various Diseases" ,"Thousands of Golden Prescriptions" and so on.

B. Taoist ,Physical and Mental Health.

Obtaining the idea and experience which is suitable for chinese from the Taoist culture, it should include theory and practice, physical health and mental health and so on.

Firstly, the traditional Taoist culture contains a lot of theories about health, and the topic of health discussed in ancient times. Chuang-tzu Zai You recorded that : Huang Di had been emperor for nineteen years. When he heard that Guang Chengzi lived on Kongtong Mountain, he went to see him and said to him, “I heard, sir, you know the boulevard. What is the essence of the boulevard? I want to use the essence of heaven and earth to help the grain mature and nurture the people. I also want to take charge of the change of Yin Yang and two Qi in order to adapt to the growth of all things. How should we do this? [8]

This is the legendary story of Huang Di asking about Guang Chengzi. Huang Di(about 2717-2599 B.C.) was also a wise man who knew how to keep fit. He lived 118 years. He not only knew how to keep fit, but also tried to make the people under his rule improve their quality of life and health. So he said, “I want to take the essence of the heaven and the land to feed my people combining with the corn.”

“Guang Chengzi lay head to the south. The Yellow Emperor knelt down under the wind and walked to Guang Chengzi. He kowtowed again. Then he asked, “I heard that Mr. Guang Chengzi understands the main Tao. How can I cultivate his mind and make his life long?” [9]

Here, Huang asked the way to be able to live forever. It can be seen that people in ancient times began to think about the long life of human beings.

“Guang Cheng Zi answered Huang Di and said, “good question! Come here, I will tell you what is the highest Tao. The deepest Tao is deep, subtle and silent. You don't need to look outside, you don't need to listen outside, keep your spirit and your body will be healthy and peaceful. The heart must be clear and quiet, do not strain your body, do not shake your spirit, so that you can live forever. Don't look at the unnecessary things with your eyes, don't listen to the unnecessary sounds with your ears, don't think about the unnecessary things with your heart. Let your mind guard your body and your body will live a long and healthy life. Keep your heart quiet, close your ears and eyes to avoid external interference, and knowing too much will spoil your monastic practice. I help you to reach the realm of Daming, to appreciate the origin of the sun, to enter the deep and dark door, to appreciate the origin of the yin. Heaven and earth both have their own dominations. Yin and Yang have their own homes. Keeping your mind carefully, the cultivation of the road will become stronger and stronger. I stick to this consistent road and keep the harmony between yin and Yang in my body, so I have been in good health for 1200 years.” [10]

The above-mentioned phrase more systematically reflects the ancient people's thought of maintaining growth and longevity, Guang Chengzi told Huang Di to achieve the pursuit of longevity by keeping spirit and keeping harmony. In order to keep people healthy at that time, Huatuo in the Three Kingdoms Period was said to have created a five-poultry opera which imitated the movements of five animals. This is the guiding technique, which is similar to the present radio exercises or square fitness dance, maintaining and improving people's physical health in a practical way.

Secondly, the ancient people not only paid attention to the health and longevity of the human body, but also paid attention to mental health. Because people have realized that mental health and physical health are dialectical unity and mutual development, physical health can be achieved only by mental health, mental health is the basis of physical health, only mental health can promote physical health and longevity. Therefore, Guang Cheng Zi told Huang Di: “You don't need to look outside, you don't need to listen outside, keep your spirit and your body will be healthy and peaceful. The heart must be clear and quiet, do not strain your body, do not shake your spirit, so that you can live forever. Form and spirit are interdependent and inseparable. Soul and body are indispensable elements of life existence.”

The production of “existence” is due to “nothing” and the human form must be supported by spirit. “existence” is the dwelling place of “nothing”, and “form” is the “spirit” apartment. So for example, analogy with a dyke, the dam is destroyed and the water can not be saved. Candle fire, candles do not exist, there will be no fire. If the body is overworked, the spirit will dissipate. If there is no breath, life will not exist. The roots of the tree have failed and the branches seem to be flourishing, but soon the trees will not have green. [11]

Ge Hong's words can be used to explain the relationship between mind and body in a metaphorical form. Therefore, Taoist pursuit of human health is necessarily physical and mental health at the same time.

III. THE HEALTHY PRACTICE OF CHINESE TAOIST CULTURE

A. “time” and health in Taoist Culture.

Taoist traditional culture, the pursuit of harmony between man and nature, as well as the pursuit of immortality, in its practice of cultivating health attaches great importance to the theory of the four seasons of nature and its application, but also pay attention to the specific way of recuperation in time and opportunity to grasp. The concept of “four seasons” is very important here. [12]For this point, Chinese traditional medicine, modern society in the emergence of health, hygiene, nutrition and other Taoist concepts are used for reference and absorption, such as “Huangdi Neijing” mentioned above .

“Huangdi Neijing Lingshu” Volume 1 “Ancient Innocence” said, “Knowing the difference between the four seasons began from a long time ago. The laws and rules that conform to the Tao I last for a long time. For example, Taoist theory holds that people can use this time to exercise for health when the sun rises in the morning; but at night, before 11 pm, people who pay attention to health should fall asleep, because in this period Yin Qi begins to grow, people should concentrate on convergence, and not dissipate the body's Yang Qi so as not to get too much Yin into the body. Huang Di Nei Jing systematically expounded the viewpoint of “time” in health preservation, and emphasized that conforming brings the treatment and violation brings the death

There is also time to choose between personal health and physical rehabilitation. From the age point of view, in addition to the younger and older and other specific problems of the population, as long as the health needs of people regardless of age can choose the right time for exercise and recuperation. The time for sitting, sleeping and leisure can be used to maintain our physical and mental health.

B. "Environment" and health in Taoist Culture

The "environment" here mainly refers to the space and environment of human existence, life, activity and residence. In Taoist and Taoist cultures, emphasis is placed on the human settlement environment, and the close relationship between good environment and people's spiritual and life health has long been recognized. Taoism inherited the ancient myths and legends, with a slight compilation of gains, forming a fairyland of Taoism. In Taoist scriptures, there is a book named "Ten Continents in the Sea" written by Dongfangshuo, which calls Kunlun, Fangzhang, Pengqiu the three islands, and the Zu, Ying, Xuan, Yan, Chang, Yuan, Liu, Sheng, Fenglin and Juku the ten continents, collectively known as the three islands and ten continents[13]. Immortals live there, and Taoist priest think it is home of cultivating themselves according to a religious doctrine. Although there may not be such a "fairyland" in reality, it also reflects people's pursuit of a better natural environment, the pursuit of a better environment is reflected in the human desire for physical and mental cultivation, health and longevity. In addition to the ideal fairyland such as 10 islands and three islands, Taoism has a record of heaven and earth. The 27th volume of Yun Ji Qi Jian, Dong Tian Fu Di-Tian Gong Di Fu Tu, records ten cave heavens, thirty-six cave heavens and seventy-two happy places in the world famous mountains. In these caves, such as Wangwu Cave, Qingcheng Cave, Luofu Cave, Dongyue Tai (Tai) Cave, Nanyue Heng Cave, Xiyue Huashan Cave, Beiyue Changshan Cave, Zhongyue Songshan Cave, Longhu Mountain, Beiqingshan Mountain, Tongbai Mountain, Tianzhu Mountain, and so on, whose places where these caves were once located are all marked [14]. Although inhabited by immortals and Taoists, nowadays ordinary people seem to be able to visit and live for a short time. In short, Taoist culture is concerned about the relationship between human environment and health.

Geomantic omen is also an ancient subject in the traditional Chinese Taoist culture. Since modern times, geomantic omen has been regarded as superstition and pseudoscience for a long time, which is very unfair. From the perspective of modern scientific theory, geomantic omen is actually a kind of knowledge about environment and human beings, which is related to human health. Fengshui is a comprehensive science which combines geophysics, geology, environmental landscape, natural ecological architecture, urban planning and other disciplines. The three health concepts of geomantic omen are living under the sun, beauty and evil in the earth and gathering Qi and wind [15]. They are closely related to the physical and mental health of human beings. We can learn useful experience from them to serve the life and health of modern people.

C. Concrete practice of health in Taoist Culture

Taoism and Taoism have more theories and experiences to learn about modern people's health. The traditional Taoist culture pays attention to human health comprehensively and abundantly, covering many fields, such as diet, physical and mental health, Taoist medicine, Taoist health and so on.

These methods can be used for reference in modern health exploration, but some of them are too professional or mysterious for us to operate, can be ignored, which can be easily manipulated by ordinary people in the specific methods and guidelines and concepts are valuable and meaningful.

As for spiritual cultivation and cultivation, Taoists had related discussions very early. Chuang-tzu's concept of health preservation is mainly about keeping spirits. In the world, if you want to get rid of the misfortune of killing, you have to act according to your own circumstances. Don't be touched by the reclame. Say things others can accept, otherwise you need to keep silent. It is necessary to forget the form and the wisdom, to forget oneself, to forget both things and ourselves, and to enter the state of "fasting of the mind" which integrates mind and nature. The so-called fasting of the mind actually borrows a kind of empty spiritual realm from ancient health preservation, which can only be experienced in a special state of mind. In Chuang-tzu, there is a Yang Sheng Zhu, whose so-called health regimen mainly refers to mental level. The "fasting of the heart" means to achieve a kind of empty quiet, so that even ghosts and gods will attach themselves, and all things can be influenced. [16]

As for the theory of physical health, Taoists do not have many methods of operation. Guidance, Qi, fetal, massage and various kinds of Dan law are all different. Take steering as an example, as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty, Taoist physician Hua Tuo created the guiding method of Wu Qin Xi.

Square dance and aerobics, which are common in modern life, can be classified into the ranks of guidance. There are also Taijiquan, Baduanjin and so on, whose movements are relaxed and strength is soft. They are very suitable for women and the elderly to exercise, to achieve the goal of physical fitness. Now many primary and secondary schools take Taijiquan as a broadcast exercise to promote the physical quality of students, and achieved good results. These Taoist methods can be operated in the sit-and-rest room. When we walk, we can use breathing, buttoning teeth and other methods to strengthen the body. When we sit and lie down, we can try Qi, thinking and other methods can be tried and practiced.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In a word, there are many theories and contents about health in the traditional Taoist culture. If we condense and summarize the valuable and essence connotation of the traditional Taoist culture, and make beneficial exploration in combination with the life style and health condition of people in modern society, and then put them into practice, it will be helpful to promote the health level of people in China and even the whole world.

REFERENCES

- [1] Information on <http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/xcs/wzbd/201610/21d120c917284007ad9c7aa8e9634bb4.shtml>
- [2] Information on https://www.sohu.com/a/137847832_508461
- [3] Zhan Shi Chuang: General understanding of Tao Te Ching, (Religious Culture Press, China 2017), p, 140.
- [4] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P65
- [5] Zhan Shi Chuang: General understanding of Tao Te Ching, (Religious Culture Press, China 2017), P61-P62.
- [6] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P60
- [7] Li Quan: Huang Di Yin Fu Jin Shu,(San Jia publishing house,China,1988).P740-P741
- [8] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P187
- [9] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P189
- [10] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P201
- [11] Wang Ming Zhuan, Interpretation of Bao Pu Zi's internal chapters, chapter 5. (Zhonghua Book Company,2001). P110
- [12] translation and annotation of Yao Chun Peng: Huangdi Neijing, spiritual pivot(Zhonghua Book Company,2010), P25
- [13] Tang Dachao Zhu: history of Taoism,(China Social Sciences Press, China, 1994) ,P.390-391.
- [14] (Song dynasty)Zhuang Jun Fang compiling, Li Yong Cheng proofreading, Yun Ji Qi Qian, (Zhonghua Book Company,2003). P608-P618
- [15] Li Jing, Graphic introduction to Feng Shui, Culture and Art Publishing House,China,2005. P.284.
- [16] Sun Tonghai's translation and annotation: Chuang-tzu ,(Zhonghua Book Company,2007) P63