

The Power of Lau (Flow)

Contributed by siukee wan

The ability to flow is one of those key defining attributes which will have an influence on the level of skill of any Kung Fu practitioner. Some would say that flow and speed are one of the same but however one looks at it, the speed at which we can change between different techniques enables us to maintain our offensive which at the same time minimises our own vulnerabilities to incoming attacks.

The first focus before working on any hand or leg techniques would be the training in co-ordination and alignment of our hands and legs to our 'Central Core', a method achieved through the system of body linking. This central core is also commonly referred to as our 'Root'. By linking we are referring to the tandem timing of our arms and legs. In actual training the focal or reference points should be our elbows and knees respectively. This type of co-ordination and timing can be seen in the familiar movements of Tai Chi practitioners when they are performing their forms.

It is initially advisable to perform these timing movements slowly so that we are able to build a higher level of body awareness.

Once a good level of co-ordination and timing is achieved the next focus is to link the arms and legs to the 'Central Core' which is located at the hips. The importance of this focal area is that it is specifically from here where we are able to leverage the additional power to our arms.

Off course just as we can link we can just as easily de-link and once we have developed the karma it should not require any conscious effort. The result of this training enables maximum support to our arms from the lower body, which in turn sets up a solid foundation to move on to training our techniques.

Building flow to our techniques is a combination of many hours of drilling and sparring. Obviously the more relaxed we are the faster we can flow but without training the foundations of body linking we potentially miss out on a whole area of additional power and stability.

Having the elbows properly aligned, linked and supported at our hips to our knees provides us with invaluable biomechanical support for our hands. By not making use of them we would need to rely more heavily on muscular power.

Thus the well known expression in kung fu - 'we push with our body not with our hands'.

