

The "*Book of Changes*," also referred to as the "*I Ching*" is an ancient work completed by the wise King Wen, a feudal Lord in the last generation of the Shang Dynasty (1766-1121 BC).

People who recognize this as a remarkable work of profound wisdom which has been passed down from an ancient culture might also want to know how the ancient ones developed their integral vision of all aspects of life.

Long ago, before teachers of a cultural heritage existed, people relied on their own natural spiritual insights and pure minds to develop a system of knowledge and solve the problems in their lives.

Living in accord with nature (at-onement) provided them with their first teacher – great nature herself.

They learned that nature provides for, supports and instructs all beings. After long periods of observation and life experience, the ancient ones not only gathered information about nature, but they also discovered the "laws" behind its seeming diversity.

The system of hexagrams which we call the *Book of Changes* or *I-Ching*, was one of the first great successes in ancient man's attempts to find the laws which regulate all phenomena.

Most significant was their discovery that the laws of great nature are also the laws of humanity and that since nature and humanity are one, harmony is the key to life. This conclusion was drawn after long internal and external searching which revealed the balanced way of life as the fundamental path.

This integral vision of the universe became the spiritual faith of ancient "*developed*" (self-realized, and enlightened) people.

It was the broad and plain foundation for their discovery of spiritual truth and secret methods. Since life is the main theme of all useful knowledge, the "*Book of Changes*," the "*Tao Teh Ching*," acupuncture, internal medicine and the internal work of Taoist meditation-cultivation all make living in harmony with nature their foundation.

Great nature (the universal SELF) always remains the true source of human life. To restore our understanding of this integral truth, we can use the "line system" of the "*Book of Changes*" to study the way in which people and events develop. We also learn that it is dangerous to violate our own nature, the subtle level of the natural order and the natural environment. We must learn to approach these ancient methods of integration with an appreciation for what they are: simple, non-coercive guidelines for harmonizing our deviated human nature with the unspoiled "great nature."

When one practices and learns the *I-Ching*, one can find external evidence showing the connection between oneself and the subtle energy of the universe. With this evidence, one may experience the melting of apparent subjectivity and objectivity. When one perceives oneself as subject and all that is external to oneself as object, one is bound and limited within that context of perception. Practice of the *I-Ching* can guide you and encourage you to move forward into the mysterious realms of the "unknown" and to the ultimate realization that what each person truly is cannot be bound or limited. In this way, one may unite so-called subject and object into one whole and restore one's intrinsic integrity.

The *I-Ching* is not a book of fortune telling, but it will express the laws of cause and effect of one's choices.

Originally, the *I-Ching*, which is also called *The Book of Changes*, contained no written words at all. It only had signs made up of three or six lines, either broken, representing yin energy, or unbroken, representing yang energy. At first, the signs were composed of three lines. All of the possible combinations of three yin and/or yang lines resulted in eight main signs known as the Pa Kua or Ba Gua. As time passed, some other sages doubled the signs, making six lines, which had sixty-four possible combinations. These signs are a concrete indication of all the energy manifestations of the universe: how they are formed and how they function.

The foundation of *I-Ching* is the principle of yin and yang. The ancient Taoist "cosmic scientists" discovered through their highly developed insight that there is essentially one primal cosmic energy. In the stillness of the unmanifest aspect of the universe, the primal cosmic energy expresses a state of oneness. As it extends itself in the process of creation, its movement causes the polarization of the one primal energy, giving birth to duality. The polar aspects of the affects thus created were designated as yin and yang. Yin and yang have many translations, such as the two sides of positive and negative, expansion and contraction, construction and destruction, masculine and feminine. Yin and yang are not two separate energies or activities. The activity of one is inherently contained within and created by the other. For example, a symphony is composed not only of musical sounds, but the silent pauses between the sounds are also intrinsic aspects of the composition. In the English language, the contradictory sense of positive and negative is strong. But in the Chinese way of thinking, yin and yang unite themselves, and through this union the existence of all things is made possible. If one side is excessive, its state of balance is lost, thereby creating the possibility of destruction.

The *I-Ching* is a book which guides a person's spiritual evolution back to God union and God-self realization. It is not a book which says, "Yes" or "No," but gives the "*consequences*" or outcome to one's choice of action in any situation.

The *I-Ching* is also a book which describes the creation of the universe and its cycles and patterns.

Authentic and accurate copies of the Tao-Teh-Ching, Hua-Hu-Ching, and I-Ching can be obtained from <http://www.taostar.com> (Los Angeles, CA, USA)