

## Grandmaster Sun Yongtian is cute

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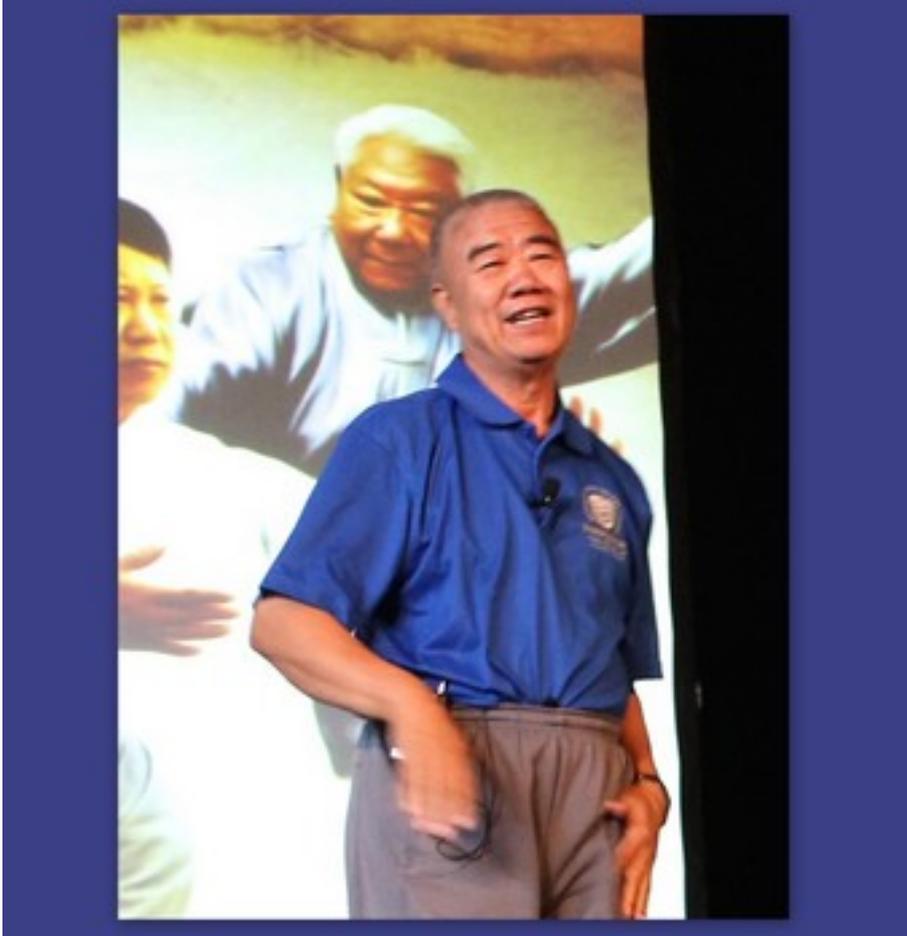
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Grandmaster Sun Yongtian demonstrated Sun Style Tai Chi during 2014 International Tai Chi Symposium.

*Ping Li*

Spiritual, energetic, brilliant, gentle, and calm are words normally used to describe a [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) grandmaster. During the 2014 International Tai Chi Symposium, many attendees called Grandmaster Sun Yongtian as cute though.



*Violet Li*

Born in 1948, Grandmaster Sun Yongtian is the third generation Sun Style Tai Chi lineage bearer. Even though he has the same last name as Sun Style creator Sun Lutang (1861-1932), Yongtian has no blood relationship with the Sun Tai Chi family. Yongtian was active and studied external [martial arts](#) in his youth including Long Fist. He became skillful and won many championships. However, he had no exposure or no knowledge about Tai Chi Chuan then.

At an introduction of a friend, Sun Yongtian met late Grandmaster Sun Jianyun (1914-2003) at age 34. As Lutang's daughter and Sun Style lineage holder, late Grandmaster Sun Jianyun was one of the top ten martial artists in China, an honor seldom bestowed to a woman or a Tai Chi practitioner. Nevertheless, Sun Yongtian said during his keynote at the Tai Chi Symposium that he was first drawn to Jianyun not because of her martial art prowess but by her artistic talents as a Chinese calligrapher, poet, and painter. He deeply appreciated her profound knowledge of culture and humanity. He studied culture related subjects as well as Tai Chi Chuan from her.

Sun Yongtian stated that Sun Style Tai Chi combines the fundamentals from Tai Chi Chuan, Xingyi Chuan, and Bagua Zhang (Chuan). Sun Tai Chi adopts some of hand postures and footwork from Bagua, and Xingyi's continuous movements. In general, Sun Tai Chi is practiced at a high stance with the back of the knees at a 135-degree angle at most, which Sun Yongtian emphasized that it is excellent for the knee health. Due to its high stance, Sun Style is very flexible and nicknamed as an active Tai Chi form that allows practitioners to continuously rock back and forth and switch directions. There are many open-and-close movements that are great for improving the health of the lungs and heart. Grandmaster Sun reminded students to keep the head suspended and upper body upright and to breathe naturally during practice.

Grandmaster Sun shared his personal story of how Tai Chi changed his life with the Symposium attendees. According to him, Tai Chi Chuan practice brought him a peaceful mind and energy. With a calm mental state and better health, he was able to study to enhance his professional knowledge. After a round of Tai Chi Chuan practice, he always gained a different perspective toward relationship with co-workers, friends, and family, and life. He became more positive and content. He was also able to think with clarity to solve problems and issues at work or with other people. His contribution at work increased and he was promoted from a low-level clerk step-by-step all the way to Chairman of the Board of a large state-run automotive sales and service company.

China's last Premier Wen Jiabao practices Tai Chi Chuan too. Grandmaster Sun jokingly said that practicing Tai Chi Chuan does not guarantee you to be a country's leader but it sure can bring happiness to you. On the stage, Sun smiled broadly constantly. A Symposium student challenged the martial art applicability of the seemingly soft Sun Tai Chi. Grandmaster Sun welcomed him to the stage and demonstrated to him and the audience by easily picking the person up and showed that he could throw him but gently let the student down.

Aside from his smiling face, Grandmaster Sun has a caring soul. During the Symposium's workshop sessions, sometimes he asked his assistants to lead on the stage while he worked on the floor and generously provided individual in person instructions without any reservation. He noticed that one of the participants was weak in the legs and relied on a worker to get to the classroom. He was touched by her enthusiasm and eagerness to learn and offered a free private lesson to her outside of the workshop.

Some commented that Grandmaster Sun's face looks like a happy Buddha and others said that he is very cute with his sunny smile and persona.

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## **Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner

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