

Temple of The Full Autumn Moon's

Taoist Eight Qi Gong

Zian Ba Qi Gong



Performed by Lars Nielsen L.Ac., Dipl. OM.

at

Harmony Community
WELLNESS CENTER



Introduction

The Taoist Eight Qi Gong, or Xian Ba Qi Gong in Pinyin, are a series of eight Qi Gong exercises developed to maintain a healthy body, mind and spirit and ultimately to attain longevity. The Chinese character for Xian is composed of two parts, one representing Man and the other representing Mountain. The symbol as a whole represents the “man of the mountain” or Taoist sages and monks that lived in remote monasteries in the Wo Shan Mountains of China. It is in this realm that these exercises were created many centuries ago.

In order to deepen our understanding of these movements, we can look to the framework of Chinese Medical theory that has been developed over the past three thousand years. Chinese Medicine was founded on many of the basic tenets developed by the Taoist sages. Through this deeper understanding we can enrich our imagery while performing the movements and thus further improve our body, mind and spirit.

Exercise #1 - Bringing Down the Heavens

In Bringing Down the Heavens we imagine bringing down the white light of Heaven and connecting with the grounding force of the Earth. The Chinese believe that Man is the link between Heaven and Earth since he is the only creature that walks upright. In the Ba Gua, or Eight Trigrams, the trigram for heaven is Chien, also known as the Creative. It represents pure Yang. The trigram for earth is Kun, also known as the Receptive, it represents pure Yin. This exercise then provides us with the opportunity to become the perfect balance of Yin and Yang which is represented by the Taiji symbol.

In performing the movement of this exercise, we visualize gather the white light of heaven and holding it in our chalice overhead. The Chinese believe that we have three major energy centers in the body. One in the upper body at a point called Yin Tang located above the brow between the eyes. This is also known as the third eye in some circles. The second in the middle of the body at a point called Dan Zhong, or Chest Center, and is located in the center of the sternum at the level of the nipples. The third, and perhaps the most important, is called Qi Hai, or Sea of Qi, and is located on the mid-line, an inch and a half below the navel. This area serves as a reservoir of Qi for the whole body. Commonly called the Dan Tien, which can be translated as the Elixir Field, it is the area from which Qi emanates and to which Qi returns. Thus, as we bring down the chalice of heavenly light and pass it in front of these areas, we attempt to open and enliven these energy centers.



Exercise #2- Peeking Through the Clouds

The next 5 exercises in the series represent the 5 elements of Chinese geomancy and Chinese Medicine. They are Earth, Metal, Water, Wood and Fire. Each element has unique properties or characteristics, each has interrelationships with the other elements and each corresponds with particular organ systems, emotions, flavor, etc. Peeking through the Clouds represents the Earth element. The Earth element corresponds with the Spleen system in Chinese Medicine. The Spleen governs the digestive functions, the conversion of food into what the Chinese term Gu Qi, or Grain Qi. It also governs transformation and transportation of the nutrients and fluids from what we ingest. The Spleen dominates muscles and flesh, since it is the nourishment provided by the function of the Spleen which allows development and maintenance of the muscles. The spleen also controls the blood and one of its functions is keeping the blood flowing within the vessels and capillaries. The Spleen is said to house the Yi, or intellect, is responsible for thinking and remembering and is linked to the emotions of worry and pensiveness. The color of the Earth Element is yellow.

The rotational movement in this exercise, along with the up and down movement of the diaphragm induced by proper breathing, gently massages and stimulates the internal organs. This stimulation improves the functions of the Spleen and corresponding digestive processes. It also improves the peristaltic action of the alimentary canal, thus assisting the Spleen's action of transportation and transformation of nutrients.

Exercise #3- Priming the Bellows

Priming the Bellows represents the Metal Element. The Metal element corresponds with the Lung in Chinese Medicine. The Lungs gather in the Qing Qi, or the Clear Qi, which can be equated to the oxygen required for respiration. The Chinese believe that the Qing Qi and the Gy Qi from the Spleen combine to build the blood and also form the Zong Qi. Zong Qi is also known as the Post Natal or Acquired Qi. The Lung also dominates the skin and body hair and regulates the exterior of the body, thus playing a role in sweat control and protection from the exterior pathogenic factors. The Lung is said house the Po, or corporeal soul. The Lung is linked to the emotions of grief, sadness and melancholy. The color of the Metal element is white.



The movements in this exercise focus on full expansion and contraction of the Lungs through proper use of the diaphragm. The movements of the arms in conjunction with the breathing help to fully open the Lungs. This helps to expel the stale air and bring in the fresh, clean air or Qing Qi. It allows the body to expel toxins and impurities and to improve the acid/base balance throughout the body.

Exercise #4- Monkey Scooping the Moon from the Stream

Monkey Scooping the Moon from the Stream represents the Water element. The Water element corresponds with the Kidney in Chinese Medicine. The Kidney governs the

Exercise #5- Monkey Reaching for the Moon

Monkey Reaching for the Moon represents the Wood element. The Wood element corresponds with the Liver in Chinese Medicine. The Liver is said to store blood and also to maintain the free movement of Qi in the body. It is the Liver then that maintains the volume of blood that is in circulation. The liver also maintains the patency of the ligaments and tendons. The Liver is related to emotional balance, courage with planning. A lack of direction is life or spiritual confusion is said to stem from a deficiency in this element. The Liver is said to house the Hun, or the ethereal soul. The color for the Wood element is green.

Emotions related to the Liver are anger, irritability and depression, feelings common to most of us living in the modern world. Since it is the liver that governs the free movement of Qi in the body as well as the amount of blood in circulation, anger and irritability, when in excess, can restrict the movement of Qi and Blood. This causes us to be "uptight" and tense, our shoulders and neck become rigid and sore. This further hinders the movement of Qi and Blood, especially to the head and brain, leading to further complications such as depression and mania.

The movements in this exercise assists in venous return and help to bring stagnant, unoxygenated blood back to the Liver and into circulation again. The up and down movement using the legs causes the muscles to squeeze and pump the blood back up the veins. The blood moves up the veins of the legs into the vena cava which collects venous blood in the trunk. The reaching movements along with the rhythmic movement of the diaphragm through proper breathing further moves blood from the trunk into the Liver.



Exercise #6- Fair Lady Working at the Shuttles

Fair Lady Working at the Shuttles represents the Fire Element. The Fire element corresponds with the Heart in Chinese Medicine. The Heart dominates the Blood and the circulation of the blood throughout the body. Qi and Blood are inseparable in Chinese Medicine. Like Yin and yang, there are two parts of the whole. Blood is considered the mother of Qi and Qi the commander of Blood. Thus, proper circulation of the Blood improves the movement of Qi and the movement of Qi improves the circulation of the Blood. The Heart is said to house the Shen, or spirit mind. The Heart is linked to wisdom, long term memory, creation of ideas and to sleep. The emotions associated with the Heart are joy and excitement. The color of the Fire element is red.

The movements in this exercise emphasize stimulation of the Heart's acupuncture channel that runs from the center of the armpit, down the lateral side of the arm to the tip of the little finger. The hand movement stretch and stimulate this channel as they move from one side to the next. The twisting movements coordinated with the proper breathing also improve the circulation of the blood, thus the movement of Qi, and reduce the stress on the heart.

Exercise #7- Heaven and Earth

Apart from the energy meridians that are associated with the various organ systems and elements, there are 8 so called "extraordinary" meridians. The two most important of these are the Ren Mai, or Conception Channel and the Du Mai, or Governing Channel. These vessels form a major energy circuit in the body known as the Microcosmic Orbit. The Ren Mai travels up the front of the body from the perineum to the tongue. The Du Mai travels up from the perineum, along the spine, up and over the head and down to the roof of the mouth. The source of both of these channels is the Kidneys.

The movements in this exercise serve to stretch and open both the Ren and the Du channels. As we bend over and stretch the lower back, we draw the breath into the Kidneys and stimulate the circulation into the Ren and the Du. When we stand back up into Taiji position, we can focus on the movement of energy through the Microcosmic Orbit, harmonizing upper and lower, Yin and Yang, thus becoming the balance between Heaven and Earth.



Exercise #8- Planting the Seed

Now that we have nearly completed our set, we have gathered up the boundless energy of the universe, we have focused on our body, our mind and our spirit, we have nourished ourselves. Yet to paraphrase chapter two of the Tao Te Ching, the Tao is neither selfish nor proud. The Tao is generous and graceful without ever claiming any merit. This last set of movements allows us then to give something back. It affords us both the opportunity to let go of our selfish desires and the negative emotions we cling to, but also to give out the loving and caring energy we all possess. This is our opportunity to make our own silent prayers for ourselves, those we love and care for, our communities and the universe as a whole. We accomplish this through our breath, the breath of life, if you will, as we exhale three times.