

Yang Sheng and Qigong



We as human beings have been on a constant search or quest to find meaning, happiness and fulfilment in our world. Without a strong healthy body and a calm emotional life, it can be very difficult to allow our true identity, our spirit or our consciousness to awaken and to merge with the divine. The mind, body and spirit are all equally important; they are collectively one or whole. All these aspects of our existence respond and can grow with regular maintenance, exercise and cultivation, allowing us to increase our quality of life and to fully appreciate the beauty of our world.

Sometimes we tend to be too focused on achieving external goals or on accumulating material possessions with the idea of becoming successful and happy. While it's important to be motivated, at an excessive or extreme level this can cause stress and anxiety and can deplete our quality of life. Maintaining a healthy life is finding balance and harmony within all the aspects of our world.

An important component of Chinese culture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the principle of 'Yang Sheng'. 'Yang' translates to 'taking care of', to 'nourish' or 'nurture' and 'Sheng' translates to 'birth' and 'vitality'. Together the words mean to 'nurture or nourish life', to 'foster a state of wellbeing by nurturing mind, body and spirit'. Yang Sheng is a manageable practice for all people, aimed at cultivating health and harmony through daily activities. The focus is on maintaining balance through an awareness of our connection with nature and our environment, our physical bodies and our spirit. Health preservation (instead of disease treatment) is an essential feature of TCM practice and is significantly different to Western medicine, which mainly focuses on disease and illness.

Many of the Yang Sheng principles are outlined in the book *Huangdi Neijing* or *The Yellow Emperor's Internal Canon of Chinese Medicine*, which dates back 2500 years. From my own experience of studying the Chinese healing arts and travelling to China on many occasions, my Chinese teachers and friends have been continuously educating me in a basic understanding of Yang Sheng: On why we eat certain foods and how the dishes are arranged and balanced with heating and cooling elements to balance Yin and Yang, how drinking warm green tea cleanses the fats from food and aids in our digestion, to remain calm and not waste our energy and to learn to sit quietly to cultivate the mind and nurture the spirit.

The study and practice of Qigong is the key element of Yang Sheng health cultivation. When we circulate Qi and clear stagnations within our meridians or energy system, this enables our Qi field or aura to increase, allowing us to achieve harmony in mind, body and spirit.

Qigong

The word Qigong is made up of two Chinese characters, 'Qi' and 'Gong'. 'Qi' (Chi) translates to the 'energy of life', the vital energy which flows through the network of meridians in the body and connects with the energy or Qi of the universe. In Japan and Korea it's known as 'Ki' and if studying Yoga the term 'Prana' is used. Most cultures have a similar terminology for life energy. 'Gong' (Kung) is a term which translates to 'work, mastery, skill and training'. The two words therefore translate to 'energy work', 'working with the energy of life' or 'mastering the energy of life'.

氣功

Qi Gong

The practices of Qigong date back many thousands of years and the underlining principles and concepts are intertwined with Chinese culture. An older term for these energetic practices that has been used since ancient times is 'Daoyin', which translates to 'guiding exercises'. The word Qigong has only been used since the 1950s as a way of classifying all the Qi or energy techniques. It can be categorised into three separate sections; Martial/Sports Qigong, Medical/Healing Qigong and Spiritual/Meditation Qigong and within these sections there are hundreds or even thousands of sub-categories.

Qigong is one of the great treasures of Chinese culture and an integral component of Chinese medical health systems. The understanding and cultivation of Qi is one of the underlying principles of Daoist, Buddhist and Confucius practices, as well as the martial arts. The art of Qigong consists primarily of meditation, relaxation, physical movement, mind-body integration and breathing exercises. There are thousands of different styles and systems practised: done standing, moving, walking, sitting or laying down. Taijiquan or Tai Chi is one more popular style.

From ancient times, Qigong was developed as a way of helping improve people's quality of life. When the mind and body come into a state of balance, stress is reduced and there is an increase in health and longevity. This allows us to become naturally in harmony with our environment and the universe. Many of the ancient Qigong styles reflect this state of harmony and balance by adapting the natural flowing movements of birds, animals and serpents.



Simon Blow from Australia is a 29th generation of the Da Yan Wild Goose Qigong and an initiated student of the 28th lineage holder Grand Master Chen Chuan Gang, the eldest son of Grand Master Yang Mei Jung. Simon is the author of numerous books, DVDs and audio CDs about the ancient Chinese healing arts. A near-fatal accident at the age of nineteen lead Simon to investigate different methods of healing and rejuvenation, a path he has been following ever since. He is a sought-after workshop presenter and travels all over Australia and to other countries sharing the healing benefits of Qigong. Simon has received training and certification from Traditional Hospitals and Daoist Monasteries in China, Buddhist Monasteries in Australia and has been given authority to share these techniques. He also regularly travels to India staying at sacred Hindu Ashrams. Simon has been initiated into Dragon Gate Daoism and given the name of Xin Si meaning Genuine Wisdom. He is also a Standing Council Member of The World Academic Society of Medical Qigong, Beijing China.

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