

## **Movement, Stillness and Breath**

The power of life is known in Chinese as Qi. The essential quality of this life force is movement. Where there is no movement, there is no life. That is not to say that stillness plays no part - far from it. However, within stillness we can always perceive tremendous movement when we concentrate.

What are the reasons for practising qigong?

My answer is: self-actualisation through movement, posture and breath.

Initially we might be attracted by the intriguing movements people perform and wish to emulate them. When we try the movements ourselves we may feel slightly awkward initially; they are after all new movements and unfamiliar. As we become more "at home" with them we find that they are indeed wonderful to perform, giving us a feeling of tranquillity and peace.

How do they do this?

First of all they require our full attention. This necessarily diverts our attention from such things as daily worries and emotional anxieties not to mention existential quandaries. They "fill up" our attention and show us that we also have a beautiful nature, even if we at times become blinded by the faults and failings of our lives and personalities.

We are thereby ushered into a softer, more harmonious aspect of our being – if merely temporarily and for the duration of the form or programme. However, if we persist and are lucky enough we will begin to notice that the effect is prolonged even as it is deepened. We realise that the movements – or non-movements – are guiding us more and more truly towards the flow of life.

And what is this flow?

It seems to be a frequency or set of frequencies which when we connect with them give us momentum, freedom to choose and the ability to sustain chosen directions. In other words, doing these simple - or at times fairly complex - movements joins us with another, smoother, more fluid rhythm in life. It may or may not prove possible to explain how this works with the conceptual tools of physics and physiology but the fact remains that once we are hooked up to the qigong frequency things are never quite the same again.

Of course it is perfectly natural and understandable that a certain level of practice gives certain levels of effect and that the more we become familiar with the rhythms of our practice, the more these patterns will work their way into the "fabric" of our being.

The boundaries we create in our lives are always more or less artificial. The boundaries that delineate qigong from its brother and sister disciplines are of course no less artificial and "constructed" than those in any other area. We can clearly see how qigong

flows out into yoga on one side, taiji and martial arts on another. The boundaries with meditation are so permeable as to be scarcely perceivable, while the application of qigong to healing merges effortlessly into the realms of such energy therapies as Reiki and Shiatsu.

On the other hand, the more we attempt to penetrate into what we perceive to be the central core of our qigong practice, the more we may notice that even here it flowers and blooms into other forms and dimensions. It is here that we encounter, for example, spontaneous qigong, which reminds us of nothing so much as trance and certain expressive dance forms.



The crucial dimension of this focus on the central aspects of our qigong and also exploring the boundaries of what is and is not qigong is the way it gradually seeps into our every day lives, affecting our daily activities and enriching them with meaning. Simple acts such as changing a bin liner, lifting boxes or cleaning a windscreen become occasions to refine and renew our connection with flow, depending of course on the crucial ability to stay on the friendly side of stress and haste!

Even when time is short though, we will gradually find that the practice of qigong and its family of related disciplines will imbue our mundane movements and activities with grace and poise, not to mention ease.

This is when we realise that our qigong practice has changed and coloured us – from the outside in and then from the inside out. From this point onwards we cease to practice qigong solely when we stand or sit to perform our sets and programmes. Qigong then becomes a force propelling us towards ease and economy in all aspects of our lives; enlarging our vision and increasing our options beyond the range permitted by rational thought, fear and convention.