

Nurturing Life with Da Yan Gong



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.

Da Yan Wild Goose

'Da Yan' translates to 'great bird' and is an ancient Qigong practice originating from the Kunlun School of Daoism in the Jin Dynasty about 1700 years ago. Legend tells that Daoist masters from the sacred Kunlun Mountains, in the northern Himalayan area in south-west China, would observe the migrating geese which descended in this area each year. They would mimic the movements of these great birds and together with their understanding of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Daoist principles, developed the Da Yan Wild Goose Qigong system.

Its healing and spiritual legacy was passed down through many generations, however Da Yan Qigong was withheld from the general public until 1978. Then 27th lineage holder Grand Master Yang Mei Jung (1895- 2002) decided to teach this ancient Qigong practice and share its healing benefits to improve the quality of life of all people. Da Yan Qigong is a complete Qigong healing system. Practitioners and Qigong enthusiasts from all over China and other countries worldwide have come to learn from Grand Master Yang Mei Jung.

The foundation of the Da Yan Qigong system is the 1st and 2nd 64 movement sets; the movements representing the flight of wild geese. There are slow graceful movements and strong quick movements designed to release stale Qi and to gather fresh Qi, helping to restore balance and stimulate the entire energy system of the body. The number sixty-four is a very auspicious combination of numbers in Chinese philosophy and is related to the sixty-four *hexagrams* of the *Yijing* (I Ching), or *Book of Changes*.

The 1st 64 movement set deals primarily with the 'postnatal body'. In traditional Daoist understanding, this refers to 'after heaven', relating to the energy that one gathers after birth, especially from breathing and food. This first set is very important as it addresses injuries and illness that we have acquired during this lifetime. It works on the twelve primary organ meridians, the collaterals and emphasises the Ren, Du, Chong and Dai channels of the body. In the 1st 64 movement set, the movements represent the daily activities of the goose as it exercises its body in its local environment and gains essence from the food, water and air.

The 2nd 64 movement set deals primarily with the 'prenatal body'. This refers to 'before heaven', relating to the energy we gather from the universe and from one's ancestors, addressing problems that have been genetically inherited. Having dredged the channels in the first form, the 2nd 64 movement set is designed to clear the channels to absorb fresh Qi, expel stale Qi and to restore organ balance. The twisting, stretching, bending and pressing movements produce stronger Qi fields and intensify the circulation of the eight extraordinary channels. In the 2nd 64 movement set the goose is embarking on a great journey and flies out from this world to the edge of the Milky Way, to pick the herbs or gather the pre-natal Qi from the core of the universe. It then flies back to this world to share this healing energy with humanity.

When we come into this world we are born with two internal batteries. One is filled with the essence, energy and spirit from the universe and our ancestors, or what is inherited by us. The second is the battery that we make ourselves, from our own endeavours and the connections that we make in this world. We become our own internal alchemist cultivating our essence, energy and spirit and with the correct knowledge, discipline the practice, we are able to increase and improve our quality of life.

All the Chinese healing exercises help aid in our development and nurture mind, body and spirit. The Da Yan Wild Goose Qigong is a very powerful exercise and throughout history has proven to improve longevity. My teacher Grand Master Chen Chuan Gang is ninety years of age and he is still very active, teaching classes each day as well as travelling to other parts of China promoting his family's skill. His mother, Grand Master Yang Mei Jung, passed away at the age of one hundred and six and she was also very active right up to the time of her passing, teaching and sharing all that she knew so others could benefit.



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 led 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 Deputy Secretary of The World Academic Society of Medical Qigong, Beijing China.

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