

Qigong

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from Qi gong)

Qigong (Simplified Chinese: 气功; Traditional Chinese: 氣功; pinyin: qìgōng; Wade-Giles: ch'i⁴ kung¹; Thai: ชีกง) is an aspect of Chinese medicine involving the coordination of different breathing patterns with various physical postures and motions of the body. Qigong is mostly taught for health maintenance purposes, but there are also some who teach it as a therapeutic intervention. Various forms of traditional qigong are also widely taught in conjunction with Chinese martial arts, and are especially prevalent in the advanced training of what are known as the 内家 (pinyin: nèi jiā) (Wade-Giles: *nei chia*), or internal martial arts.

There are currently more than 3,300 different styles and schools of qigong. Qigong relies on the traditional Chinese belief that the body has an energy field generated and maintained by the natural respiration of the body, known as qi. *Qi* means breath or gas in Mandarin Chinese, and, by extension, the energy produced by breathing that keeps us alive; *gong* means work or technique. Qigong is then "breath work" or the art of managing the breath to achieve and maintain good health, and especially in the martial arts, to enhance the energy mobilization and stamina of the body in coordination with the physical process of respiration.

Attitudes toward the basis of qigong vary markedly. Most Western medical practitioners, many practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine, as well as the Chinese government view qigong as a set of breathing and movement exercises, with possible benefits to health through stress reduction and exercise. Others see qigong in more metaphysical terms, claiming that breathing and movement exercises can influence the fundamental forces of the universe. An extreme form of the latter view was advocated by some participants in the Boxer Rebellion of the late 19th century who believed that breathing and movement exercises would allow them to ward off bullets.

Contents

- 1 History
- 2 Uses
- 3 Beliefs
- 4 Criticisms of qigong
- 5 Controversies within qigong
- 6 See also
- 7 References
- 8 External links

History

Qigong under various names has a long history in China. The written records referring to qi and its effects are as old as 3,300 years (Shang dynasty oracle bones, Zhou dynasty inscriptions). Numerous books have been written about qigong during the subsequent history of China. The development of Chinese qigong can be divided into three periods:

- In ancient China, people came to believe that through certain body movements and mental concentration combined with various breathing techniques, they could balance and enhance physical, metabolic and mental functions. These movements were worked out over time by exploring the natural range of motion through the joints, as well as drawing on motions in imitation of various animals. This research was passed down and refined according to teacher-disciple relationships of lineage or apprenticeship. This accumulated body of traditional knowledge is known as Chinese traditional qigong.
- In later centuries, these practices became more standardized, very often associated with religious

practitioners. For example, incense burning was originally used to measure time and also to repel insects during qigong practice, and eventually became an important part of the meditative process itself. Over time, new forms of qigong were created and passed down through various schools; Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian, Neo-Confucian, Chinese medicine, and the traditional Chinese martial arts.

- In the 1950s, researchers began studying qigong using the scientific method, with peer-reviewed and controlled studies of various techniques to provide a scientific evaluation of claims for the efficacy of qigong. Scientific study of this topic is still active, with particular emphasis in eastern countries, although research into the medical benefits is also active in western countries.
- Now various medical universities issue Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Qigong, or include Qigong in their curriculums.

Uses

Today millions of people in China and around the world regularly practice qigong as a health maintenance exercise. Qigong and related disciplines are still associated with the martial arts and meditation routines trained by Taoist and Buddhist monks, professional martial artists and their students. Formerly much more closely guarded, in the modern era such practices have become widely available to the general public both in China and around the world.

Medical qigong treatment has been officially recognized as a standard medical technique in Chinese hospitals since 1989. It has been included in the curriculum of major universities in China. After years of debate, the Chinese government decided to officially manage qigong through government regulation in 1996 and has also listed qigong as part of their National Health Plan.

Dr. Yan Xin (嚴新), a doctor of both Western and Chinese medicine as well as founder of the relatively popular Yan Xin Qigong school, suggests that in order for qigong to be accepted by the modern world it must pass the test of scientific study. Without such studies, Yan maintains that qigong will be dismissed as "superstition" (see "Criticism of Qigong" chapter below). In the mid-1980s he and others began systematic study of qigong in some research institutions in China and U.S. More than 20 papers [1] (http://www.accessv.com/~yuan/yansci/time/2002_YanXin_Qigong_JSE.pdf) [2] (<http://www1.elsevier.com/cdweb/views/article.htm?jnl=00243205&iss=3&vol=69&pii=S002432050101122>) [3] (<http://www.scientificexploration.org/jse/abstracts/v16n3a4.php>) [4] (<http://bst.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/22/5/403>) have been published. Taijiquan, a martial art based on the principles of internal qigong, appears to be a potent intervention to prevent falls in elders, maintain joint mobility, and improve balance.

Beliefs

Qigong and its intimate relation to the Chinese martial arts are often connected with spirituality. They have thereby been considered the province of religious practitioners in the popular imagination for many centuries. This link is much stronger than with other techniques in traditional Chinese medicine. Qigong was historically practiced extensively in Taoist and Buddhist monasteries as an adjunct of martial arts training, and the claimed benefits of martial qigong practice are widely known in East Asian martial traditions and popular culture. In addition, the traditional teaching methods of most qigong schools (at least in Asia) descend from the strict teacher-disciple relationship conventions inherited in Chinese culture from Confucianism.

In some styles of qigong, it is taught that humanity and nature are inseparable, and any belief otherwise is held to be an artificial discrimination based on a limited, two-dimensional view of human life. According to this philosophy, access to higher energy states and the subsequent health benefits said to be provided by these higher states is possible through the principle of cultivating *virtue* (*de* or *te* 德, see Tao Te Ching). Cultivating virtue could be described as a process in which one recognizes that one was never separated from nature (a Taoist metaphor for this is the "uncarved block" - which refers to a primal, undifferentiated state of being free

of artificial discrimination), a process made possible with the energy made available to the qigong students after they sincerely choose and implement what they are taught as positive lifestyle choices, which will include practicing specific qigong techniques for ameliorating the effects of previous choices seen as less virtuous (see karma).

It is claimed by some that the level of an individual's qigong accomplishment is fundamentally dependent upon the level of their virtue. Therefore in qigong, the practitioner's focus on virtue is an extremely important technical requirement, especially in the advanced levels. Without such continuous cultivation of virtue, one will not be able to achieve a highly relaxed and tranquil mind/body state.

Criticisms of qigong

Much of the criticism of qigong involves its claimed method of operation. Both traditional Chinese and Western medicine practitioners have little argument with the notion that qigong can improve and in many cases maintain health by encouraging movement, increasing range of motion, relaxation, and improving joint flexibility and resilience. However, the benefits of qigong become much more controversial when it is asserted that qigong derives its benefits from qi acting as a kind of "biological plasma" that cannot be detected by our sense organs or their extensions in the form of scientific instruments. Many biologists and physicists are skeptical of these claims and regard them as pseudoscientific.

Many proponents of qigong claim that they can directly detect and manipulate this energy. Others, including some traditional Chinese practitioners, believe that qi can be viewed as a metaphor for biological processes, and the effectiveness of qigong can also be explained in terms more familiar to Western medicine such as stress management.

Controversies within qigong

In the 1980s and 1990s, the increasing popularity of qigong and related practices led to the establishment of many groups and methods in China and elsewhere that have been viewed in a critical light by more traditional qigong practitioners as well as skeptical outside observers. In this view, a large number of people started studying qigong under inadequate supervision, indeed, perhaps the majority of people today who study qigong study from books or video tapes and DVDs without supervision by a teacher. This laxness can lead to several problems, according to those who view themselves as representative of orthodox schools. Most traditional training takes many years of practice under the supervision of someone who has also learned over years, someone who can guide and prevent the student from taking an unbalanced approach to qigong practice. The theory is that unbalanced circulation of inner energies eventually leads to unbalanced effects on the various systems of the body, both mental and physical.

Stories of unguided practitioners or inexpertly guided students developing chronic mental and physical health problems as a result of such training are not uncommon. A term used by English speaking practitioners and teachers for one example of this syndrome is "Qigong Psychosis" (Now included in the DSM-IV as a culture-bound syndrome: Qi-Gong Psychotic Reaction: DSM-IV General Information: Appendix I, Outline for Cultural Formulation and Glossary of Culture-Bound Syndromes). Another function of improper training involves frauds and deliberate charlatans who promote themselves as qigong "healers" promising miracle cures of any conceivable affliction for the right amount of money. Traditionally, qigong is considered more of a health maintenance regimen, and any promises of miracle cures should be viewed with suspicion, according to traditional teachers and practitioners.

This recent popularity has also led to increased attention for quasi-religious groups teaching styles of qigong in an atmosphere of New Age-like spirituality. Qigong has been associated in China with Taoist and Buddhist meditation practices for two thousand years, and this association has recently been exploited, according to traditionalists, by many would-be cult leaders. Perhaps the most notable example of a group promoting a synthesis of overt religiosity with qigong practice is the Falun Gong group, whose worldwide popularity grew

to the point that the People's Republic of China government banned their practice outright in 1999.

See also

- Buddhism in China
- I Ching
- Jing (TCM)
- Mind-body problem
- Mindfulness
- Neigong
- Placebo effect
- Tai Chi Chuan
- Tao Yin
- Taoist Sexual Practices
- Tui na
- World Tai Chi and Qigong Day
- Yijinjing
- Yoga

References

External links

- an indepth video covering Wudang Qigong (<http://www.wudanglongmen.com/>)
- Article: "Scientific articles about qi qong" (<http://www.naturesbracelets.com/qigongresearch.html>)
- Article: "Good health is our birth-right" (<http://wongkk.com/general/birth-right.html>)
- The website for Fu Wei Zhong and Emei Qigong (<http://www.emeiqigong.com/>)
- (WhatIsQi.com) A Emei Qigong Reference site (<http://www.whatisqi.com/>)
- Center for Taoist Qigong for Health and Vitality (<http://www.dantao.com/>)
- Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (<http://www.csicop.org/>)
- Doc-Fai Wong Martial Arts Centers - World Headquarters (<http://www.plumblossom.net/>)
- National Expert Meeting on Qigong and Tai Chi (http://www.taichieasy.org/National_Expert_Meeting/)
- Fragrance Qigong (Xianggong) (<http://www16.brinkster.com/xianggong/>)
- National (USA) Qigong Association (<http://www.nqa.org/>)
- Neigong.net (Neijia Internal Exercise Reference Site) (<http://neigong.net/>)
- Qigong Association of America (<http://www.qi.org/>)
- Scientific research from the Qigong Institute (<http://www.qigonginstitute.org/>)
- The Skeptics Dictionary (<http://www.skeptdic.com/chikung.html>)
- Veritas Society - Qigong articles (http://vsociety.net/wiki/Body_Energy_Arts_articles)
- Medical Science Monitor - Abstract of Scientific Qigong research (<http://www.medscimonit.com/medscimonit/modules.php?name=GetPDF&pg=2&idm=5189>)
- Tai Chi a promising remedy for diabetes (<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1535304.htm>) - pilot study of qigong and tai chi in diabetes sufferers.
- The Journal of Chinese Medicine (<http://www.jcm.co.uk/>)
- Pan Gu Mystical Qigong (Pan Gu Shengong) (<http://www.pangu.org/>)
- Spring Forest Qigong (<http://www.learningstrategies.com/Qigong/Home.asp>)

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qigong>"

Categories: Articles with unsourced statements | Articles lacking sources | Chinese martial arts | Chinese terms | Meditation | Traditional Chinese medicine | Taoism

-
- This page was last modified 03:29, 10 July 2006.
 - All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free

Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia
Foundation, Inc.