

The Art of Life

大道無形

Simon Blow



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Disclaimer

The intention of this book is to present information and practices that have been used throughout China for many years. The information offered is according to the author's best knowledge and is to be used by the reader at his or her own discretion and liability. Readers should obtain professional advice where appropriate regarding their health and health practices. The author disclaims all responsibility and liability to any person, arising directly or indirectly from taking or not taking action based upon the information in this publication.

This book is dedicated to

... all those who are facing challenges in their life.

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Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for helping me to compile and develop this book and DVD.

Since I started teaching full-time in 1992, I have taught 18 to 22 classes per week – the best way to learn something is to teach it, as the old saying goes. This is especially relevant when working with the universal life force Qi energy, as it is important to be in front of people to share this energy. Qigong Master Jack Lim told me that when you are teaching a class, think of it as being with a group of friends and sharing. Thank you for this advice, Jack.

I would like to thank all those friends who have attended my classes and workshops over the years. I get many ideas and positive feedback from the students and people I meet, and from those who have generously shared their own experiences. I am not sure if we have original ideas or if, when the heart opens and the Qi flows, we are simply all one. Again, thank you.

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We refer to Qigong as an art form. It is a process of refining our internal energy to harmonise with the external energy or environment. It is our own observation of our relationship with everything around us. We are influenced by everything around us, we are one with everything.

I have had the fortunate opportunity to meet many great masters, professors and doctors, but mainly, just great people who are committed to contributing to the development of the human race. Thank you.

Foreword

I first met Simon Blow in 1983 in a personal development and meditation class. A few years later, some of us in that meditation class shared a house with Simon and I got to know him as a gentle person with a quiet sense of his own individuality. Unlike many others in their twenties, Simon was rarely swayed by fads and fashions or by what others thought important. He seemed to follow his own inner vision with calm certainty. However, it was evident that he was also open-minded about many different avenues of self-development and spiritual awareness and was searching for answers.

We lost touch for a few years while I began my psychotherapy practice and continued my studies in meditation with the Clairvision School in Sydney. In the early nineties I felt I needed to extend my meditation practice with an exploration into Tai Chi. I tried a couple of different teachers but was unimpressed by the experience until I happened to walk into a class taught by my old friend Simon. This wasn't the only surprise. The class itself and the sense of Simon's presence were extraordinary. I felt my energy revive and flow in a peaceful harmony. I knew I would have a long association with this gentle energy form.

I was familiar with martial arts. In the sixties I had studied judo as a child and in the seventies enthusiastically took it up again along with two other Japanese martial arts – Karate and Ju-Jitsu. I learnt Zen Buddhist meditation with it. I learnt about energy and in particular, about Ki – known in Chinese as Chi or Qi. It fascinated me that using Ki, a small person such as myself could overpower a much stronger, larger one, using the weight and momentum of the opponent. When pushed, I learnt to pull. When pulled, I learnt to push. In another Japanese form, Aikido, I learnt about the power of circularity of momentum in throwing an opponent. I was very much into the Warrior archetype. I loved fighting, pitting force against force, seeking the weakness in my opponent. Overcoming obstacles, being unstoppable and seeking challenges in all areas of my life were all part of it – but they were also somewhat of a diversion and more inner work was needed in my life to balance the extreme physicality of these martial arts. I plunged more deeply into meditation. Work and family commitments then took over and I let go of the martial arts for a period. Ten years later, when I met Simon again in his Tai Chi class, my body had slowed down enough for the fighting spirit of the Warrior to be replaced by something gentler and wiser. I realised Simon was embodying the next stage of my journey. He became

my teacher. At the same time I was retracing the history of unarmed martial arts itself, back to the practices of Shaolin warrior monks in China around the 7th century CE.

Because Tai Chi is a soft form and more about health than combat, it is not an obvious choice for a person who likes fighting and force-against-force. In fact, when I had tried it once in my mid-twenties I found it incomprehensible. Who wanted to move so slowly? I just didn't get it. I had to slow down altogether for it to make sense to me. I needed a certain maturity. By then, I knew from my martial arts training that intention can command the direction of Ki within the body. After all, with intention, concentration between the eyebrows and Ki, I could break a piece of solid pine planking with my hand or foot. When it came to Tai Chi, I found the principle was the same, though there was no force at all. Intention allowed Qi to flow from my core, my lower Dan Tian, through my entire body, or from my feet to the crown of my head or my fingertips. The vibrational flow was inherently healing. I could feel it as it moved powerfully along the meridians and through the organs. It balanced me. I felt calm and energised. It increased the awareness I had already developed in my meditation practices. It deepened my healing practice with clients. Before long, I also became an instructor of Tai Chi, for a time teaching alongside Simon and then branching into my own classes.

Simon's studies expanded into Qigong, a more profound form of intentional inner energy flow that originated 5,000 years ago in ancient Traditional Chinese Medicine, and that, he has now naturally passed on to his students. It is the main subject of this book. For many years, in addition to my own daily practice, Simon and I met weekly for Qigong practice under the trees in the park, through all the seasons of the year, much as people in China do daily. We'd then go back to my meditation room to meditate for an hour. It was an enriching process in both our lives.

I am privileged to write the foreword to this, Simon's first book, and delighted to have provided the illustrations. Through the more than quarter-century that I have known him, I've been constantly impressed with his calm persistence and single-mindedness. Living what he teaches, Simon's achievements mirror the wisdom of the Dao De Jing of Lao-Tzu in its description of water.

*The highest good is like water,
Water nourishes the Ten Thousand Things
Without striving with them.*

VIII

From his early battle to overcome devastating injuries due to a car accident as a teenager, to the ongoing pursuit of his vision to help others overcome their own challenges, Master Simon Blow embodies the true archetypes of Peaceful Warrior and Teacher. If you are lucky enough to be in one of his classes, you will have experienced the calm that emanates from him. If you have one of his beautifully produced Qigong DVDs, in which black swans and ducks peacefully forage a few feet away from Simon under the trees, you'll be able to feel it too. In the practice of this healing art, you will discover your own serenity and balance of body and spirit. May this book enrich your life.

Avril Carruthers BA M.Couns.
Sydney, November 2009.

About the Author: Simon Blow

A near-fatal accident at the age of nineteen led Simon to investigate various methods of healing and rejuvenation, a path he has been following ever since. Simon is a Sydney-based (Australia) master teacher (Laoshi) of the ancient Chinese art of longevity and has been leading regular classes for beginning and continuing students since 1990.

Having travelled the world to learn and explore this ancient art, Simon has received extensive training and certification from many respected sources: Traditional Chinese Medical Hospitals and Daoist Monasteries in China, Buddhist Monasteries in Australia, and Hindu Ashrams in India. He has been given authority to share these techniques through his teachings and publications.

Simon received World Health Organisation Certification in Medical Qigong clinical practice from the Xiyuan Hospital in Beijing and is a Standing Council Member of the World Academic Society of Medical Qigong in Beijing. He has also been initiated into Dragon Gate Daoism and given the name of Xin Si, meaning Genuine Wisdom.

His dedication, compassion and wisdom also make Simon a sought-after keynote speaker and workshop facilitator. By demand he has created a series of Book/DVD sets and guided meditation CDs. He also helps produce CDs for the Sunnatram Forest Monastery, the YWCA Encore program and a series of Meditation CDs for children and teenagers.

China holds a special place in Simon's heart. He has had the great fortune to travel to China on many occasions to study Qigong, attend international conferences, tour the sacred mountains and experience the rich culture of the Chinese people. Since 1999 he has been leading unique study tours to China so he could take people to the source and give them the opportunity to experience first-hand this ancient healing practice.

Romanisation of Chinese words

The Genuine Wisdom Centre uses the Pinyin romanisation system of Chinese to English. Pinyin is a name for the system used to transliterate Chinese words into the Roman alphabet. The use of Pinyin was first adopted in the 1950s by the Chinese government, and it became official in 1979 when it was endorsed by the People's Republic of China.

Pinyin is now standard in the People's Republic of China and in several world organisations, including the United Nations. Pinyin replaces the Wade-Giles and Yale systems.

Some common conversions:

Pinyin	Also spelled as	Pronunciation
Qi	Chi	Chee
Qigong	Chi Kung	Chee Kung
Taiji	Tai Chi	Tai Jee
Taijiquan	Tai Chi Chuan	Tai Jee Chuen
Gongfu	Kung Fu	Gong Foo
Dao	Tao	Dao
Daoism	Taoism	Daoism
Dao De Jing	Tao Teh Ching	Dao Teh Ching

How to use this DVD and book

Traditionally we follow the teacher/master and this balances the energy. Watching and following the DVD will bring your mind, body and energy into balance. But in time, say one or two years, try practising on your own without watching the DVD. This book provides additional detail and theory to complement the practices on the DVD and provides a deeper understanding of this amazing healing art. But in time you will make the movements your own and will learn to master the movements and techniques.



Chapter 1

Introduction

The Art of Life



Introduction

Qigong (Chi Kung), and the understanding of Qi (Chi), is one of the great treasures of Chinese culture. It has emerged over thousands of years from constant research, development and practice. From ancient times to the modern world, we as human beings are on a continuous journey of self-enquiry to discover our true identity and purpose in life.

Qigong originated in China as a way of cultivating spiritual, physical and emotional health. Similarly, other cultures had holistic approaches to connect and harmonise with their local environment and their known universe. When we lose this connection it causes problems and we are not able to enjoy the experience of life as much as we could.

*“When you are proud of your achievement it is time to stop.
If you sharpen and strengthen your mind by taking advantage of people, your enjoyment will not last long.
One who accumulates valuable things will not be able to maintain them without becoming a slave to them.
Becoming rich and noble with pride is to invite trouble for oneself.
After accomplishing one’s goal it is time to retreat.
This is the way of Heaven.”*

Lao Tzu, Dao De Jing. Chapter Nine

Its origins trace back to the Tangyao period of 4,000-5,000 years ago. It was clearly outlined in the book Huangdi Neijing or The Yellow Emperor’s Internal Canon of Chinese Medicine, which in 2,500 BC described the basic theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine and is still used today.



Daoyin Diagrams

Medical books published from the Han Dynasty 200 BC show detailed theory and clinical practice of Qigong techniques for treating disease and improving health. Silk scrolls known as the Daoyin Diagrams, unearthed in 1972 at an archaeological dig in Changsha, China, show detailed illustrations of medical Qigong exercises and have been dated to 168 BC.

Qigong is a relatively new term to describe all the Chinese energy or Qi techniques. Qi or Chi is a term meaning ‘life force energy’ that flows through the energy channels or meridians in the body and connects with the energy of the universe. Gong or Gung translates as work, mastery or skill – literally, a way of working with the energy of life. There are three main categories of Qigong: Martial, Medical and Spiritual. The Qigong methods described in this book relate to medical/healing and spiritual Qigong.

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, either done standing, moving, walking, sitting or lying. Tai Chi is one popular style.

For thousands of years, millions of people have benefited from Qigong practice. From ancient to modern times, Qigong self-healing exercises have been used to help improve people’s quality of life. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, good health is a result of a free-flowing, well-balanced energy system. Ailments, both physical and emotional, occur when the flow of Qi is blocked or impeded, causing imbalance and dysfunction in the body’s energy system. With regular practice, Qigong helps to cleanse the body of toxins, restore energy, reduce stress and anxiety, and help individuals maintain a healthy and active life.

Qi – the essence of life

Qi (pronounced Chi) is the foundation of Taoist thinking and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and is described by Taoist Master Hua-Ching Ni in his book, *Tao – the Subtle Universal Law and the Integral Way of Life*:

“Chi is the vital universal energy that composes, permeates and moves everything that exists. Chi may be defined as the ultimate cause and, at the same time, the ultimate effect of all activity. Chi is the ultimate essence of the universe as well as the law of all movement. When Chi conglomerates, it is called matter. When Chi is diffuse, it is called space. When Chi animates form it is called life. When Chi separates

and withdraws, it is called death. When Chi flows, there is health. When Chi is blocked, there is sickness and disease. Chi embraces, circulates through and sustains all things. The planets depend on Chi to regulate their atmosphere, light, weather and the seasons.

“So, it is Chi or vital energy that activates and maintains all life. Chi animates all the processes of the body: the digestion and assimilation of the food we eat, the inhalation and exhalation of air by the lungs, the circulation of the blood, the dissemination of fluids throughout the body and, finally, the excretion of waste products.”

This flow of energy or Qi in our body is directly related to our posture and body movements, breath and mental condition. When the mind, body and breath are in harmony, our Qi will also be in harmony. It will flow naturally through the energy channels or meridians of the body, allowing us to connect with the energy of the universe.

When we practise Qigong, it's important not to try too hard. Most forms of Qigong involve gentle movements, balanced with rhythmical, regulated breathing, and in a calm, focused and unhurried way. Take your time and allow the movements and breath to develop. In the classic text called *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the sage Confucius says:

“Flowing water never stagnates, and the hinges of an active door never rust. This is due to movement. The same principle applies to essence and energy. If the body does not move, essence does not flow. When essence does not flow, energy stagnates.”