The Theory and Practice of

TAIJI QIGONG
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TAIJI
QIGONG

Chris Jarmey
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About the Author

Chris Jarmey first became interested in Oriental philosophies at the age of 9, being particularly drawn to Buddhist and Daoist practices. This led him at the age of 14 into the exploration and practice of both Indian Yoga and a Chinese martial art known as Kenpo.

His interest in practices that enhance or restore health was catalysed at the age of 11, when he suffered a serious fall from a cliff face, damaging his pelvis and thoracic spine. This caused serious pain and mobility problems by the time he was 18, at which time he applied his budding understanding and experience of Yoga and Qigong to successfully correct the problem. From then onwards his interest in the healing arts developed and he embarked upon a search for those who could teach him more about oriental healing methods.

Throughout the past 30 plus years, Chris Jarmey has spent his time researching and practising bodywork-based healing methods alongside the extensive practise of Buddhist and Daoist Qigong, Yoga and meditation methods. He has been taught by several teachers, but considers himself particularly fortunate to have studied under Geshe Damcho Yonten (Tibetan Buddhism and meditation); Mother Sayama (Theravadan Vipassana meditation); Masahiro Oki (Dao-Yinn, Qigong, Shiatsu and Zen meditation); BKS Iyengar (Hatha Yoga); Okudo Roshi (Zen meditation); Dr Norman Allen (Ashtanga Yoga) and Pauline Sasaki (Shiatsu).

Also of great value was information and insight gained at courses given by Dr. Shen Hongxun (Buqi and Qigong); Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming (Qigong); Master Mantak Chia (Qigong); and Dr. John Peacock (Kum Nye: Tibetan Yoga / Qigong).
In 1975, Chris began his study of Western approaches to healing and rehabilitation, as a means to contrast and supplement his experience of Eastern methods. He qualified as a state registered Physiotherapist in 1978, with a special interest in therapeutic exercise systems. Shortly afterwards he embarked upon extensive study and research into Osteopathic methodology. This was followed up with a training given by Carlo Depaoli in Western herbal medicine based on Traditional Chinese Medicine principles.

Concurrent with the above studies, from 1978 to 1981 he researched and evaluated the healing effects of Yoga, Shiatsu and Qigong within NHS hospitals and medical rehabilitation centres, with good results.

Between 1981 and 1985 Chris lived and studied in a number of Yoga centres and ashrams in India, the UK and the USA, to broaden and deepen his experience of Indian Hatha Yoga and related arts, such as the ancient and comprehensive Indian medicine system known as Yoga Chikitsa. Then, in late 1985 he founded The European Shiatsu School to offer a comprehensive practitioner training course in this effective form of bodywork. Since then, the school has become a registered charity and expanded its courses throughout the UK and the European mainland.

Chris Jarmey’s adopted system of Qigong and Yoga has now been put to the ultimate test because of a trauma that caused him to have no heartbeat and therefore zero blood pressure for over three hours. This could be viewed as a validation of his method, because he survived ‘sudden cardiac death’ (which normally causes death within seven minutes) by using his experience of mindful, directed Qigong breathing.

Chris is currently the school’s Principal and Course Director, dividing his working time between giving treatments, teaching Shiatsu, holding specialist Qigong workshops, and writing books. For further information about Qigong, Oriental Medicine or Meditation courses, please contact:

The European Shiatsu School
Central Administration
High Banks, Lockeridge
Nr. Marlborough e-mail: info@shiatsu.org.uk
Wiltshire, SN8 4EQ website: www.shiatsu.org.uk
How to Use This Book

This book acts as an in-depth instruction manual for the practice of the 18 Stances of Taiji Qigong (Taiji Qigong Shibashi), which is widely practised throughout the Far East and increasingly throughout the Western world. Many of the exercises are loosely based on the movements and stances of Taiji Quan. However, it is not to be confused with Qigong exercises for Taiji Quan, although it could be used as such.

Methods of Qigong are many, and the variations within these methods are endless. Even within Taiji Qigong Shibashi there are at least six different ‘styles’ that I have come across; which means there must be even more. Generally though, this method of Qigong, and its variations are practised as a very simple, easy to learn system that is ideal for beginners. However, many people also use it as a serious core practice, or as an adjunct to yet deeper methods.

This book is written with all levels and depths of practice in mind. It is constructed so that you can take from it the necessary information and techniques to suit your goals. If you want to use it as a basic Qigong health and well-being maintenance programme, you can largely ignore Part One and go straight to Parts Two and Three, although you will find Part One very interesting as background information.

If you want to practise with a view to really experiencing your internal energy, read Part One, but understand that some theories and practices described belong to deeper levels of Qigong and are mentioned purely to put this level of training into context and give a broad overview. If you are an experienced practitioner of the deeper internal methods of Qigong, Part One may serve to clarify certain concepts for you, and enable you to apply some of those internal methods to Taiji Qigong. I would however, advise you not to think of yourself as an ‘advanced’ Qigong practitioner, if deep down you know this to be
untrue. If you fall into that trap, you could end up wasting a lot of time.

The so-called ‘levels’ or depths of practice are not meant to imply a greater or lesser quality of practice. They simply relate to one’s goals. There are many benefits to be gained from practising what appears to be a more external, simple system, and many pitfalls to practising more complex or deeper techniques. This is because the consequences of practising incorrectly are greater; which can easily happen without a good teacher monitoring your work.

So, when you get to Part Three, which is all about how to do each of the exercises in turn, follow the general instructions, but when you get to mental focus, choose basic, intermediate or advanced focus according to your experience and aspirations. Basic focus represents the focus used by the vast majority of people who do these exercises. Intermediate focus is for those who want to explore the power of their visualization skills within the exercises. Advanced focus is for experienced Qigong practitioners who are at least competent with reverse abdominal breathing (see pages 63–65), and who wish to experience their internal movement and distribution of Qi at a deeper level.

Although the 18 stances are presented and commonly practised as a unified set or ‘form’, any of the exercises can be done in isolation or grouped together in smaller sets of your choice. However, if you find that you are consistently abandoning a particular exercise, just be aware that it is human nature to avoid the things that may ultimately allow us to grow.

It may be that you flick through this book and wonder why it has to be so detailed and ‘wordy’. Is it not better to lean towards minimalism with regard to theory and instruction when dealing with what is essentially an experiential art? Shouldn’t the individual be left to discover the effects, benefits and effective mental focus through their own diligent practice? In a way, yes; and you can still take that approach with this book by simply following the instructions on how to move during each exercise.

However, the detail given beyond that is designed to offer ideas and indications that will speed up your progress. Believe nothing until you have tried it; and once you have experienced the subtleties for yourself, feel free to modify it, so long as you stay within the principles of Qi and Yin-Yang, which themselves have been tested and refined over many thousands of years.