

# A Quick Note on Qigong

Sai Shradha\*

Department of Microbiology, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

## Editorial

Qigong is a practise that consists of coordinated bodily posture and movement, breathing, and meditation. Qigong practise often consists of slow-flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and a quiet meditative frame of mind. Qigong is used throughout China and the world for recreation, exercise, relaxation, preventative medicine, self-healing, alternative medicine, meditation, self-cultivation, and martial arts training. Qi (or chi) primarily refers to air, gas, or breath but is frequently translated as a metaphysical concept of 'vital energy,' referring to a supposed energy circulating through the body; a more general definition is universal energy, which includes heat, light, and electromagnetic energy; and definitions frequently involve breath, air, gas, or the relationship between matter, energy, and spirit. With roots in ancient Chinese culture dating back more than 4,000 years, a wide variety of qigong forms have evolved within different segments of Chinese society: in traditional Chinese medicine for preventive and curative functions, in Confucianism to promote longevity and moral character, in Daoism and Buddhism as part of meditative practise, and in Chinese martial arts to improve self-defence abilities.

Beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the mainland Chinese government attempted to unify different qigong techniques into a single cohesive system, with the goal of providing a sound scientific foundation for qigong practise. Contemporary qigong combines numerous and sometimes contradictory traditions, most notably the Daoist meditation practise of "internal alchemy." Qigong's popularity expanded dramatically throughout the Deng and Jiang regimes following Mao Zedong's death in 1976 until the 1990s, with estimates ranging from 60 to 200 million practitioners across China. Along with popularity and state approval came controversy and concerns, including claims of supernatural abilities, pseudoscience explanations to enhance credibility, a

mental illness known as qigong deviation, the formation of cults, and masters exaggerating claims for personal gain.

Qigong is a broad range of activities based on Chinese philosophy that coordinate the body, breath, and mind. Qigong practise, as a moving meditation, often combines slow stylized movement, deep diaphragmatic breathing, and quiet mental attention, as well as vision of guiding qi through the body. Dynamic practise entails fluid movement that is usually well organised and coordinated with breath and awareness. Static practise entails maintaining postures for extended periods of time. Breath awareness, imagery, mantra, chanting, sound, and an emphasis on philosophical notions such as qi circulation, aesthetics, or moral principles are all used in meditative practise. The meditation focus in traditional Chinese medicine and Daoist practise is generally on cultivating qi in dantian energy centres and balancing qi flow in meridian and other pathways. The Yin-Yang and Five Phases Theory, Essence-Qi-Spirit Theory, Zang-Xiang Theory, and Meridians and Qi-Blood Theory are ancient Chinese qigong theories that have been synthesised as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

TCM focuses on detecting and rectifying underlying disharmony in terms of deficiency and excess, employing the complementary and opposing energies of yin and yang to achieve a balanced flow of qi. Although clinical research into the possible health benefits of qigong is ongoing, there is no financial or medical motivation to encourage high-quality research, and only a small number of studies meet established medical and scientific requirements of randomised controlled trials (RCTs). Qigong is used for meditation and self-cultivation in a variety of philosophical and spiritual systems. Qigong, like meditation, is a way to calm the mind and achieve a state of consciousness that promotes tranquilly, clarity, and bliss. Qigong, with its gentle focused movement, is more approachable to many practitioners than sat meditation. Qigong is an important component of both internal and exterior style Chinese martial arts. The emphasis on qi is thought to be a source of power as well as the foundation of the internal martial arts method.

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**\*Address for Correspondence:** Sai Shradha, Department of Microbiology, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, E-mail: devshotsaishradha@gmail.com

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