

Lian Gong Qigong Programme

Movement, Posture and Breath

Introduction:

Liang gong is one of the very first qigong styles I learned and I have been practising it more or less regularly for 18 years. It always comes back freshly and never ceases to delight me. Why? All our likes and dislikes are intensely personal things. The Liang Gong programme suits me. Maybe that's all there is to it. I do other forms as well, however, and they are very different. So why do I like Liang Gong so much?

Perhaps it is because of the special balance between movement and stillness, or maybe it has to do with the relationship between movement and breathing. It could be the gradual awakening from small stirrings to full expansion that I particularly enjoy. What I do know for sure is that the transformation from start to finish is like a journey in time from the depths of winter to full summer sunshine. I also enjoy the reactions I see in newcomers to the form. Initially they are somewhat puzzled by the static posture and minimal movements. Gradually they begin to warm to the natural, if unusual movements. Finally they rejoice with me in the full celebration of the body and its energy field spreading and circulating internally, and even, in some cases externally.

The programme begins very gently so there is no need for any kind of warm up. It allows one to stand comfortably, concentrate on posture and activate the breath very gradually. It opens the body in small stages, so that each little joint can take its turn to open up and expand freely. Every minor and major muscle group gets to wake up, stretch and increase its blood circulation. In addition, as a shiatsu practitioner, I am delighted when I can identify clear meridian connexions, and experience the meridians expanding and filling with energy, one after another.

Liang Gong is a modern qigong programme originating in Shanghai, China. The creator, an acupuncturist and practitioner of traditional qigong, wanted an exercise programme for his patients, which was suitable for circulating and releasing energy in an efficient way with emphasis on stretches and physical movements. To this extent we can call this an example of external qigong.

The programme owes much to the Ba Duan Jin, but is more varied and less repetitive. It also owes a good deal to the Five Animals, but is less ambitious in its range of challenging, dynamic movements. It even has similarities with the Luo Han Gong form but the movements are not as closely linked with the martial arts. It has, nonetheless, proved itself to be an excellent warm-up and slow-down programme for leading into and completing martial arts training.

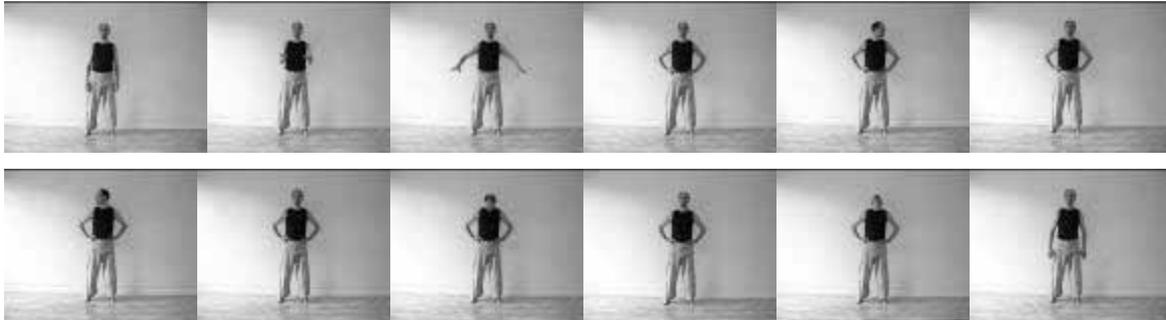
Lian Gong can be seen as an introduction to breath and movement co-ordination. It moves and stretches the body, freeing blockages throughout the body and creating a more dynamic flow of energy. Synchronisation of movement with breath increases the intake of oxygen and the expulsion of carbon dioxide as well as harmful deposits lodged in muscle, tendon and joint tissue in a gentle way.

This is the method of 'cultivating Qi' by maximising intake, optimising use of resources and ridding the body of unnecessary elements accumulated by life style, habits and environmental pollutants. It creates a calm and stable equilibrium where mental activity is reduced to the strictly necessary, and thought can be used to advantage from a still point.

The form begins with very simple standing and movements of the head, neck and shoulders, works through varying postures to open the spine and waist, activates all of the acupuncture meridians and gives the legs a sense of power and flexibility. The final sections are more mobile with movements forwards and backwards, balance and coordination. We end with a marrow cleansing ritual and a standing meditation. The final feeling is one of release and circulation of energy in and around the physical body. This brings us back to the original purpose of the programme, which was to help people get over difficult illnesses and prevent recurrence of symptoms through a complete and thorough activation of the meridian energy system.

The movements:

1. Mobilise neck and spine. Look slowly to left and right . Repeat. Look slowly down and up. Repeat.



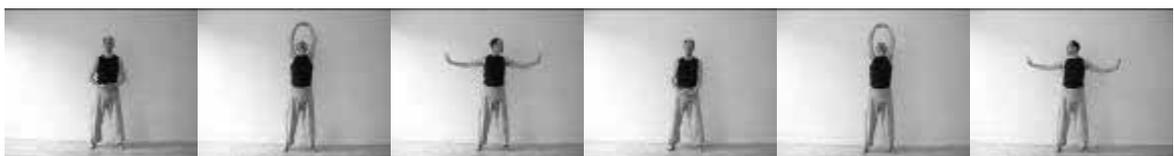
2. Open the triangle. Pull your arms out to your sides in a 90 degrees angle. Look to left then right. (x2)



3. Bat wings. Raise your arms then pull them down firmly and in to your sides. Look to left then right. (x2)



4. Open the circle. Raise your arms together and open them out to the sides. Look to left then right. (x2)



5. Massage kidneys. Drag the backs of your hands over your kidneys, around your waist and up beside your breast bone. Look to left then right. (x2)



6. Twisting the vertebrae. Make a big circle with your left arm and follow with your whole body, then straighten your body and follow through with only your arm to finish, eyes following. Repeat with right then left and right again.



7. Stretch sideways. Lift your arms straight up together, looking up. Tilt your body to right side once gently then once more completely, looking straight ahead. Arms up, out and down. Repeat to left.



8. No kisses! In horse stance push forward with your open right palm turning your upper body from the waist to the left. Look backwards. Fold your fingers around your thumb, pull in your right hand to your waist and repeat the movement now with your left palm pushing forward, while twisting your upper body to look behind and to the right. Repeat to left and right.



9. Wild horse. In horse stance crouch slightly lower and rotate your upper body in a circle to the left, up and round. Repeat. Make the circle twice more, but this time up to the right and round.



10. The rack. With legs stretched as widely as possible, arms and hands go up together and then separate out to the side and back with the outbreath. With the inbreath, push your arms even more out and back. As you breathe out, let your hands join as they travel down and between your legs. Follow with your eyes. Your hands come forward and up together again as you breathe in. Repeat once more.



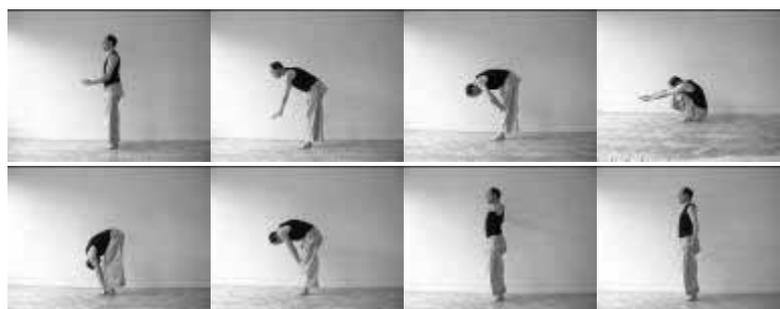
11. Spear hands. Come back to horse stance and gather your hands at your waist. Slowly shoot out your right hand like a spearhead diagonally and straight up to the left. Follow with your eyes and turn out your right heel to make a straight line from right heel to right fingertips. Pull your hand back in to your waist and, regaining horse stance, repeat to right side then again left and right once more.



12. Spinal stretch. Gather your feet together and raise your arms together up above your head. Follow your hands forward and down towards the ground. Let your hands now follow from your heels up the backs of your feet, over your kidneys, up to your chest and then push down and to the sides with the next outbreath. Repeat once more.



13. Crouching monkey. Allow your hands to move forwards and outwards from your body and then come to rest on your knees, body weight pushing gently backwards. Crouch down to sit on the soles of your feet with knees bent (if possible). Rest your hands on your feet now and push upwards with your backside. Straighten your back as your hands gently ride up your legs, stomach and chest then out to the sides. Repeat once more.



14. Turning the waist. Send your left leg out and sink into horse stance. Turn your waist and sink back on to your right leg, looking left and stretch left hip. Repeat to right then to left and right again.



15. Gravity's Rainbow. Allow your hands to rest on your thighs in horse stance. Your left hand makes an arc in the sky and your eyes follow. Repeat with right arm and then with left and right again.



16. Stepping forward. Take a step diagonally forward with your left foot and follow through with your hands forward, down and then up and all the way back. As your hands come together and forwards again, bring your back foot up and stand balanced on one leg. As your hands separate and come down to your sides, your right foot flattens out and then steps back behind you again. Follow your hands once more forwards, down, up and back and this time bring your front foot back and stand on your back leg. Your hands separate, come down to your sides and then as your left foot flattens, it comes down to rest beside your right foot. Repeat the whole sequence this time stepping diagonally forward to the right side.



17. Open front and crouch back. With your hands on your hips, take a small kick-step diagonally forwards with your left foot. Look up as you open your front side, breathe in and come up on your toes at the back. As you breathe out, sink your weight back on to your right foot, roll your back, neck and head down and point your toes up at your face. Look at your toes. Step forward now with your right foot and open your front, then sink back down on to your left foot and open your back. Lift your right foot now, place it behind you and sink back down on to it once more to open your back and neck. Lift your left foot and step back to centre. Repeat the whole sequence this time to the right side.



18. Cosmic shower and marrow washing.

