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Shaolin Temple and Kung Fu

With a history dating back 1,500 years and countless legends, the monks of Shaolin Temple have been a purveyor of the world-renown martial arts systems. It is a fully developed training program with historical records handed down within the Shaolin Monastery. There are 708 Shaolin Kung Fu sets in existence, out of which 552 sets are designed for fist methods and various weapons. The remaining 156 sets cover 72 secret techniques and training methods for grappling, free fighting, joint locking, attacking acupuncture points, and Qigong.

The physical manifestation of Shaolin Kung Fu centers on its possible use in combat. Each set contains a series of movements which are based on the human anatomy and natural movements of the body. The movements within each set emphasize the mixing of action and response, balancing of Yin and Yang energies, combining soft and hard movements, and exhibiting one's spirit of vitality in the postures. Among the movements' principles, the most important one is the 'The Six Co-ordinations.' They are: the coordination of one's hands with the feet, one's knees with the elbows, one's shoulders with the hips, one's mind with the intent, one's intent with Qi, and one's Qi with the physical strength. Training involves one's state of mind, and one's whole body covering the hands, eyes, body, footwork, and knowledge in martial applications so that all parts of the body will act as one naturally and effortlessly.

Shaolin's Self-defense applications

Shaolin's self-defense forms include Open-hand forms, weapon forms, enhanced self-defense forms, and Qigong. If open-hand and weapon forms are broken down into portions, each of them can be used to self-defense application. Forms are good for increase one's body balance, flexibility, and the six co-ordinations of the body. Enhanced self-defense forms are SanDa and QinNa. SanDa is the practice of martial applications in a realistic environment or simply free fighting. QinNa or ChinNa is techniques that control or lock an opponent's joints or muscles/tendons so he cannot move, thus neutralizing the opponent's fighting ability. It is a must-know for all Chinese police officers.

What is Qigong (Chi Kung)?

'Qi' or 'Chi' is Chinese terms, meaning energy, life force, or vital essence. In Yoga, it is called 'Prana'. 'Gong' or 'Kung' means work, self-discipline, or achievement. Qigong is the practice of learning to control the movement of the life force ("Qi" or "chi") internally. Therefore, Qigong means the exercise of your internal energy. It is an over thousand-years-old Chinese healthcare modality that has both endured the test of time and is making a tremendous resurgence at the threshold of the 21st Century.

How Qigong works in a living body?

Practicing Qigong is to get harmonized Qi that circulates in a living body and supports life. When Qi is blocked within the body system, according to Chinese thought, then the body

manifests emotional imbalance or physical sickness. When the Qi is blocked, it builds up where it may not be needed or wanted, much like too much water will overflow a riverbed and flood into surrounding areas. Because of this build-up in the wrong area, other parts of the body do not receive sufficient Qi, like lack of water will drought. Once there is an imbalance of Qi flow, the entire body will be affected and disease will result and then, ultimately, illness and death.

The fundamental value of qigong is to improve Qi circulation, and help the body to remove the Qi blockages and increase the flow of Qi throughout the system. Once the Qi flows freely and evenly, the body heals and restores itself naturally, efficiently, and consistently. Thus, emotional balance and physical health are improved and maintained. And by controlling Qi, strength is enhanced.

The benefits of Qigong are increasingly recognized for enhancing fitness in mind and body, developing vitality for sports and sex, and helping in the cure of stress as well as degenerative and chronic diseases. Literally millions practice Qigong in China and around the world each day to successfully treat diseases ranging from hypertension to cancer.

What is Ba Duan Jin?

The **BaDuanJin**, also called Eight Pieces of Brocade is one of the most common forms of Chinese Qigong exercise, practiced by millions people in China and around the world. It employs eight movements of Yi Jin Jing, the most notable Qigong manual of the Shaolin Temple. The Baduanjin as a whole is broken down in to eight separate exercises, each focusing on a different physical area and Qi meridian. The Baduanjin traditionally contains both a standing and seated set of eight postures each, yet can be practiced solely or together. Though the movements are easy to learn, the type of breathing required demands mental focus and a fully present effort in order to get the full benefit. This exercise does not fit the mental image we commonly have in the West of physically strenuous exercise. Regardless, it creates a different type of demand on the body and does require an honest and concentrated effort on the part of the participant. Normally, practitioners practicing regularly with appropriate instructions through professionals will get result within months.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is actually a type of Qigong involves more complicated movements that also have applications in the martial arts. Without a solid foundation of Qigong, Tai Chi is just a set of slow and gentle exercise, similar to slow dance. There are varied types of styles of Tai Chi, such as 18 movements, 36 movements, 48 movements, or even 72 movements Tai Chi.

Baduanjin vs. Tai Chi

Both Baduanjin and Tai Chi are qigong forms, yet there are differences. First, Tai Chi involves more complicated movements; thus, practitioners may have to spend more time and effort to learn or to get benefits than do Baduanjin. Second, Tai Chi has much higher mobility than Baduanjin does. To practice Tai Chi, one has to stand and move around, yet Baduanjin does not. One can practice Baduanjin when seated. Thus, even those with mobile problems or disability,

like seniors citizens, can benefit from Baduanjin. Third, Tai Chi requires an open and broad space to be practiced; rather Baduanjin can at your bedroom. It may need no more than 6 feet by 6 feet area.

Other studies about Qigong

Several studies have proven *Qi Gong*'s effectiveness in treating those with high blood pressure and other heart problems. When practiced alongside conventional Western medical treatments, *Qi Gong* reduces high blood pressure and aids cardiac rehabilitation through improving balance, coordination, and physical activity.

A Korean study examined the effects of traditional *Qi Gong* on blood pressure, respiratory rates, and heart rate. "Heart rate, respiratory rate, systolic blood pressure and rate-pressure product were significantly decreased during Qi-training," according to the 2000 study. "From these results, we suggest that... Qi-training has psychological effects that indicate stabilization the of cardiovascular system."

A 2006 study conducted at the Himalayan Institute of Medical Science in Uttaranchal, India proved similar results. Researchers compared mental relaxation and slow breathing as adjunctive treatment in patients of essential hypertension by observing their effects on blood pressure and other autonomic parameters like heart rate, respiratory rate, and skin temperature. "Even a single session of mental relaxation or [*Qi Gong*] can result in a temporary fall in blood pressure."

Doctors in Hong Kong evaluated *Qi Gong* and progressive relaxation in improving cardiac patients' quality of life. "Progressive relaxation and *Qi Gong* exercise improved the quality of life for cardiac patients with reference to certain physiologic and psychologic measures. ... The *Qi Gong* group demonstrated greater improvement in psychologic measures in addition to reduction in systolic blood pressure."

A 2005 Italian study examined instances of high blood pressure in those suffering from hypertension: "Slow breathing reduces blood pressure and enhances baroreflex sensitivity in hypertensive patients. These effects appear potentially beneficial in the management of hypertension."

Practicing *Qi Gong* lowers pulse rate, blood pressure, metabolic rates, and oxygen demand. The sense of serenity *Qi Gong* activates *qi*, improves blood circulation, and balances the body's life energies. After reducing hypertension and blood pressure, *Qi Gong* goes on to surprise us with more and more benefits to the human body.