

The WAY of VIRTUE

Qigong Meditations to Cultivate
Perfect Peace in an Imperfect World

ROBERT PENG

with Rafael Nasser





Table of Contents

Introduction 1

PART 1: ASPECTS OF MIND

1. Basic Concepts 11
2. Mind as Number 23
3. Mind as Voice 55
4. Mind as Body 87

PART 2: THE JOURNEY TO SPIRIT

5. The Six Healing Sounds 113
6. The Twelve Meridian Empowerment 163
7. Huo Lu Gong Spirit Cultivation 241

Epilogue: A Dream, Imagined 289

Acknowledgments for Robert Peng 299

Acknowledgments for Rafael Nasser 301

About the Authors 303



1

Basic Concepts

The Three Dantians and the Central Meridian

Everybody that is born dies. One moment a heart is beating, a chest is rising and falling, eyes are blinking, and the next moment, life departs, and we are standing before an inert object.

In Daoism, the distance between life and death is measured in terms of Qi (chee) energy. Qi is a broad term that can be compared to electricity. Run electricity through a bulb and it lights up. Run electricity through a satellite phone and you can communicate with anyone anywhere on the surface of the planet. The same electrical current powers a vacuum cleaner and a blower. Likewise, Qi powers the myriad functions related to our internal organs and our cells. Qi regulates digestion and respiration, circulation, and excretion. All our vital functions reflect the quality of our Qi flow. When Qi is running properly through our body, we are alive and thrive. When Qi flow is imbalanced or deficient, symptoms of ill health arise. When Qi flow stops, we die. Qi is synonymous with life force.

Daoist masters mapped out the major routes of Qi flow inside the human body with exquisite precision. Perhaps you have seen an acupuncture chart punctuated with hundreds of energy points running along a dozen meridian lines. Those charts represent some of the main channels that Qi follows. The points serve unique functions, and regulating them through acupuncture or Qigong meditation allows us to divert life force from one part of the body to another. That concept is central to Chinese medicine and self-cultivation. Daoist masters also mapped out three energy centers

that are more fundamental, though less familiar, than the meridians and the acupuncture points. These energy centers, known as the Three Dantians (dan-tee-yen), are interlinked by a powerful central channel known as the Central Meridian. This network of energy centers forms the backbone of the human energy system, and developing an awareness of the Three Dantians and the Central Meridian defines the starting point of our journey.

Please look at Figure 1.1 below.

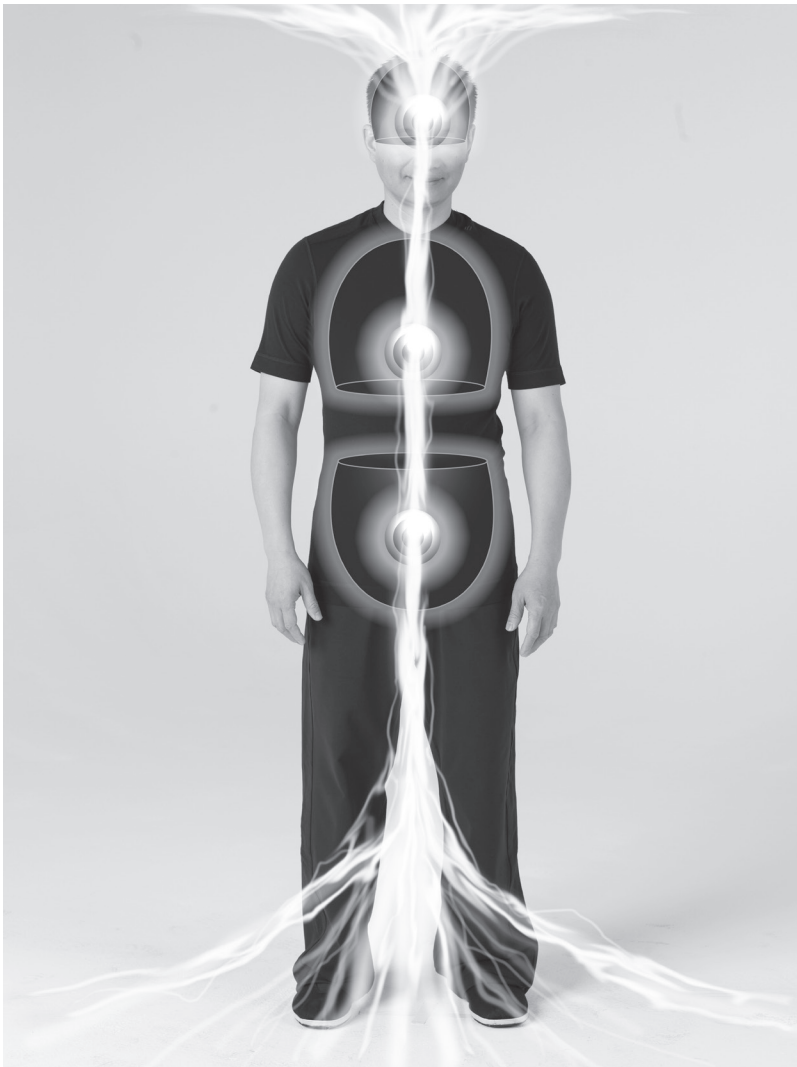


Figure 1.1: Dantian and the Central Meridian

Notice the three spherical energy centers. Each of these is a Dantian and can be envisioned as a little sun radiating Qi energy from its core. When you awaken and empower the three Dantians, you literally feel an energy vibration radiating from the center and filling your body with warmth and a sense of well-being.

Each Dantian is associated with a specific quality. The Upper Dantian is the energy field located at the center of the head. This center regulates wisdom and creative intelligence. Imagine having to decide between two jobs and being intuitively guided toward one over the other. You envision one option working out better. While you can't prove that decision is the right one, you are guided inwardly. When the Upper Dantian is radiating healthy Qi, we feel guided and tend to make better life choices. And when the Upper Dantian is blocked or deficient, we are unable to feel guided or envision the way forward. We feel as disoriented as a spinning compass needle and we lack a trustworthy sense of direction. The Upper Dantian is associated with Wisdom.

The Middle Dantian is the sphere located in the center of the chest cavity behind the sternum. This center regulates the capacity for love and compassion. Imagine your heart opening in the presence of someone you love. You feel deep warmth and tenderness emanating from the center of your chest. When the Middle Dantian is awakened and radiating healthy Qi, you experience open-hearted love toward people close to you and compassion toward strangers. Love is a spectrum that extends from the personal to the universal, and as the Middle Dantian develops, so does our capacity to love the world. When the Middle Dantian is blocked or deficient, our capacity to love is brittle and, in some cases, the heart shuts down and becomes a beating stone unable to give or receive any love at all.

The Lower Dantian is the sphere located slightly below the navel in the lower abdomen. This center regulates sexual energy and our ability to act in the world. Imagine waking up in the morning overflowing with vitality. You push through the day like a workhorse full of drive. When the Lower Dantian is awakened and empowered, our capacity for endurance increases. You feel vital and alive and are rearing to go like a racehorse about to start a race. When the Lower Dantian is blocked or

deficient, getting out of bed just to feed yourself feels like a daunting task. When a menial task feels like carrying a sack of rocks up a steep hill, our Lower Dantian is probably depleted.

Wisdom, Love, and Vitality define the functions of the three fundamental centers of our energy body. These three centers are integrated by an energy channel called the Central Meridian that runs from the top of the head to the perineum and interpenetrates the Three Dantians. The Central Meridian extends above the head to connect with celestial energies and below the pelvic floor to connect with the energies of the earth.

The Central Meridian regulates our Wisdom, Love, and Vitality. When the Central Meridian is in a state of flow and connected to the earth and the sky, our Wisdom, Love, and Vitality are expressed in an integrated way. Such an individual experiences Wisdom rooted in Love, Love rooted in Vitality, and Vitality rooted in Wisdom. When you encounter a person with a Central Meridian streaming healthy Qi, you are in the presence an integrated human being.

When the Central Meridian is deficient or unable to flow freely, we may feel Wisdom, Love, and Vitality at different times in different situations, but we lack the ability to experience all those qualities simultaneously. Imagine a wise woman who can't connect her creative energies to her Vitality. She lacks the power to convert her intuition into action. Or an athlete who lacks the capacity to integrate sexual Vitality with Love. Or a big-hearted friend who cares deeply but offers terrible guidance.

My teacher, Xiao Yao, referred to the Three Dantians and the Central Meridian as the Four Golden Wheels. "Golden" refers to the happiness these energy centers provide when they are circulating Qi as an integrated unit. Happiness that relies on the gratification of the senses is a temporary fix. And while there is inherently nothing wrong with enjoying the fruits of the world, we cannot sustain happiness when we depend on pleasure for our well-being. The Four Golden Wheels generate organic happiness that is self-sustaining and arises from within.

The exercises in my first book, *The Master Key*, are designed to systematically awaken and empower the Four Golden Wheels. The following exercise draws on some of the practices described in that book to help you

awaken these energy centers. But before we can begin to practice, we need to learn how to sit properly for meditation practice. Adopting the Natural Sitting Posture is essential to all the exercises presented in this book.

Exercise 1: Effortless Sitting

Sit comfortably on the floor, on a meditation cushion, or on a chair. Do not try to look like a monk seated in full lotus position if crossing your legs constricts blood flow or causes any kind of discomfort. Discomfort will distract your attention while you meditate. Sitting comfortably while maintaining structural alignment is important. Proper structure is emphasized for the practices taught in this book because we often use chanting to activate our internal organs, and the proper alignment of the spine transforms our torso into a resonance chamber. When we are sitting properly, we become like an auditorium with good acoustics. We can chant a sound and direct that vibration to a specific part of the body. If we slump or lean back, we dampen the sound and the vibration does not reach its destination.

When you are sitting, allow the natural curvature of your spine to keep the vertebrae stacked on top of each other. Avoid slumping over or resting on a wall or the back of the chair. When your spine and the soft tissues surrounding the vertebrae are properly aligned, each vertebra will hold up the weight of all the others above it without muscular strain. The sacrum supports the lumbar vertebrae, the lumbar vertebrae support the thoracic vertebrae, and the thoracic vertebrae support the cervical vertebrae that extend into the base of your skull.

Once you are seated comfortably, rest your hands on your lap in a relaxed position. Keep your hands positioned comfortably so that they do not strain and divert your attention from the meditation.

Whether you are seated on the ground or a chair, feel the weight of your body transferring through the ischial tuberosities, your sitz bones. If you are sitting on a chair, feel that weight travel through your legs to your feet. Feel yourself rooted to the ground through the soles of your feet.

To summarize, your vertebrae are stacked without requiring muscular effort. Your arms and shoulders are comfortable and relaxed without

muscular strain. Your body's weight extends to the floor through your sitz bones and through your feet if you are sitting on a chair.

When you are seated properly, you quickly lose your body sense. The structural integrity formed by your skeletal alignment dissolves the burden of weight. When you are properly aligned, your breathing is effortless. Your organs hang comfortably like fruits on a tree without feeling any internal pressure. By simply adopting Natural Sitting Posture, you automatically enter a deeply relaxed and meditative state.

Once you are seated comfortably, close your eyes. Feel your lids touching gently and allow the tip of your tongue to rest comfortably against the largest groove you encounter on your upper palate. The tongue will wedge and rest effortlessly in that position. Feel your tongue relaxed and steady. This is the natural tongue resting position. Breathe naturally through your nose, inhaling and exhaling effortlessly. Do not control the breath. This is called natural breathing.

Spinal alignment with eyes closed, natural tongue resting position, and natural breathing position establish the Natural Sitting Posture. With most of the exercises in this book, I begin with the words, "Adopt Natural Sitting Posture." All the details described above are implied by that phrase.

1. Sit comfortably on a chair, a meditation cushion, or the floor.
2. Feel your sacrum, lumbar spine, thoracic spine, and cervical spine form an integrated structure.
3. Trace the alignment of each vertebra from the top of your spine to the sacrum.
4. Feel the weight of your body travel down your spine to your hips and your sitz bones. If you are seated on a chair, feel the weight of your legs root to the ground through your feet.



Figure 1.2: Natural Sitting Posture

5. Rest your forearms comfortably on your thighs. Clasp your hands or keep them on your lap. Relax your hands and your fingers. Your hand position should be free of tension or strain.
6. Place your tongue on the first groove of your upper palate.
7. Breathe naturally through your nose.
8. Close your eyes.
9. You are now in Natural Sitting Posture. Breathe naturally for three cycles or more and open your eyes.

Exercise 2: Chanting Ong, Ahh, Hong

Now that you are familiar with Natural Sitting Posture, we can introduce an exercise that uses sound vibration to awaken the Four Golden Wheels. Sound vibration is a useful meditation tool because it penetrates internally. While you can easily massage an acupuncture point on your arm, you can't poke your finger through your ear and massage the center of your head. However, you can activate the center of your head using the sound, ONG. ONG is the sound of the Upper Dantian. In this exercise, we adopt Natural Sitting Posture and chant ONG repeatedly, *ongggg . . . ongggg . . . ongggg . . .* We pause between chants to feel the vibration at the center of your head.

Next, we chant the sound of the Middle Dantian, AHH. Chant AHH out loud a few times, *ahhhhh . . . ahhhhh . . . ahhhhh . . .* Direct the vibration to the center of your chest toward the Middle Dantian.

Next, intone the sound of the Lower Dantian—located at the center of your lower abdomen slightly below and behind your navel—HONG. *Honggg . . . honggg . . . honggg . . .* Direct the vibration toward the Lower Dantian.

Finally, we combine all three sounds to activate the Central Meridian. Inhale and become aware of the sky above your head. Chant: ONG, AHH, HONG and feel the vibration flow along the Center Meridian, the central axis of your body. When you end the chant, bring your awareness to the ground below you, and as you inhale, become aware of the sky again and chant: ONG, AHH, HONG. Below you will find the formal instructions for this exercise.

1. Adopt the Natural Sitting Posture.
2. Inhale and become aware of the sky above your head.
3. Chant ONG, AHH, HONG. Feel the sound vibration awaken your Upper, Middle, and Lower Dantians. *Ongggg . . . ahhhhh . . . honggg . . .* Repeat nine or more times.
4. When you complete the chant, become aware of the earth.
5. Repeat the chant nine times or more.
6. Sit silently for nine breaths or more and open your eyes.



Figure 1.3: Chanting Ong, Ahh, Hong

Exercise 3: Nourish Your Qi

After we finish meditating, we Nourish your Qi. This is a practice that we use to close every exercise. We can compare mediation practice to making tea. First, we heat up the water, and then we steep the tea. Steeping the tea is like nourishing our Qi. It is a passive activity. We do nothing. The lack of action *is* the action. Every practice activates our energy body. After we end the activity, we allow our body to simmer in an ocean of Universal Qi, the background energy of the Universe. We envision ourselves as a sponge immersed in water. Is the sponge inside the water or is the water inside the sponge? Both are true. My master, Xiao Yao, would describe Nourishing Qi as, *“I am in Qi; Qi is in me.”*

Begin by sitting or lying comfortably. Make sure the floor does not feel cold or hard. Feel yourself floating in an endless expanse of energy that is illuminated and bright, as bright as if the sun were shining directly overhead and radiating through the water. *I am in Qi; Qi is in me.* Allow this energy to nourish your body. Every cell in your body is soaking in Universal Qi. You are becoming brighter and lighter. *I am in Qi; Qi is in me.* You are dissolving into a beautiful ocean. This ocean is endless and boundless and you are basking in the warmth of the light. *I am in Qi; Qi is in me.* Nourish your Qi. Allow yourself to become light and bright, endless and boundless, until your eyes open naturally.



Figure 1.4: Sitting or lying in an ocean of Qi