

## **Healing through the Meridians and the 8 Channels**

To work with both the meridians and the psychic channels, Taoists and Buddhists in Ancient China developed Qigong exercises that train both the body and mind and which have the capacity to help promote healing. Qigong exercises coordinate physical movements with diaphragmatic breathing and have been used for thousands of years to illuminate internal processes in order to locate and correct imbalances. These exercises unite meditation techniques with physical exercise, and while there are thousands of such exercises, one of the oldest and most beneficial self-healing sets is the ancient Taoist technique known as the Lesser Heavenly Circulation, which trains the individual to cultivate Chi and focus awareness to direct that Chi throughout the body. The Lesser Heavenly Circulation is very accessible and its coordinated physical movement, breath work and Chi work embody the essence of all Qigong practices.

To begin the exercise, stand in a relaxed position with the feet shoulder-width apart, the knees slightly bent, and with the hands resting at ones sides. With the inhalation, raise the hands up the front of the body to shoulder height and then draw them back towards the shoulders. Simultaneously, the legs straighten as the hands are raised. With the exhalation, the hands travel back down the body along the sides as the knees bend, thereby returning to the starting position. The mind concentrates on leading the Chi up the body—from the Du Qi (see below), about one inch below the navel, to the solar plexus, Shan Zhong—as the hands travel up to shoulder height and then back towards the shoulders. As the hands descend the sides, the Chi is directed down to the tailbone (Hui Yin) with the exhalation.

The entire exercise is repeated until one feels the warmth of the energy increasing with the hand movements and the breath.



In coordination with the mind leading the Chi, the muscles are used as pumps (arms being raised and lowered and the bending and straightening of the legs) to increase circulation. The coordination of breath and movement is the basis of therapeutic and medical Qigong wherein movements done in conjunction with the breath will bend, stretch and massage a specific organ. The muscle movement isolates an area of the body, thereby increasing the current of Chi to that spot.