

# **Qigong for Meditators**

**Eight Pieces of Brocade**

氣功

**Unfettered Mind**

© February 2005 by Ken McLeod  
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Illustrations of the eight pieces of brocade by Dick Allen.  
Front cover calligraphy (*qi gong*) by Sifu Jianye Jiang.  
*Dantien* illustration on page 3 from Luohan Qigong.

## Introduction

*Qi* (pronounced “chee”) means *energy*. *Gong* (rhymes with “lung”) means *work* or *practice* or *cultivation*. So *qigong* (also spelled *chikung*) is *energy practice*.

*Qigong* is practiced in different ways as a spiritual discipline, in martial arts such as tai chi chuan, or for health or longevity.

The eight pieces of brocade (*ba duan jin*) is a simple set of exercises (actually two sets, one done while sitting and one while standing) that was created to maintain the energy, flexibility, and health of soldiers in twelfth century China.

The movements in this booklet are designed to help balance energy for people who are practicing meditation or energy transformation methods.

## General Principles of Qigong

Relax by sinking. Let your attention sink to the *lower dantien* in the center of the body an inch or two below the navel. Feel the center of gravity.

Let your weight sink to the *yongquan* (*bubbling wells*) in the hollows of the feet. Feel the soles of the feet on the ground.



*Qigong* is an energy practice, not a stretching or callisthenic exercise. Most of the eight movements open with pushing the energy down and then drawing it up with the movement of the palms. Then close the movement with pushing *qi* down with the palms. Movements have no beginning or end, so move smoothly from one to the next.

- Stay balanced and centered.
- Be aware of the entire body.
- Keep the body relaxed. Keep the eyes relaxed, open and soft.
- Keep a little bend in joints even when extending them. In others words, don't lock the legs or arms straight.
- Let energy flow through the body and let the body move naturally, like silk.
- Breathe naturally and without force.
- Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. In general, exhale as you extend and inhale as you return.

Ordinarily, one does the set once a day, with twelve repetitions of each movement. In retreat, we do each piece three times at the end of each sitting period. We don't do more repetitions because we are doing the *qigong* several times a day.

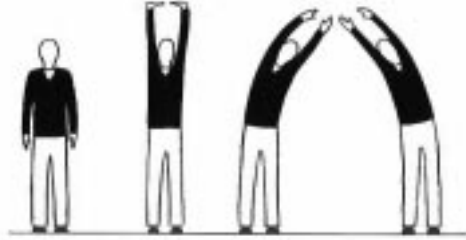
If you do these movements once a day, then build up gradually, starting with six repetitions for a couple of weeks, then nine, and eventually twelve.

- Avoid doing *qigong* on a full stomach.
- Because *qigong* generates energy, you may have difficulty sleeping if you do it late in the evening.

Practicing *qigong* regularly is deeply helpful to mind and body.

Starting and stopping energy practices suddenly is not good for the body. If you decide to stop practicing at some point, taper off gradually over a couple of weeks rather than stopping suddenly.

## First Piece: Push Up the Heavens



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width apart.

Raise your arms above your head, turning the palms upward as if pushing the sky up, raising your heels slightly off the ground (less than an inch).

Lower your heels, then let the upper body bend to the left and then to the right. Let the spine bend, vertebra by vertebra, from the base up. Straighten up the same way.

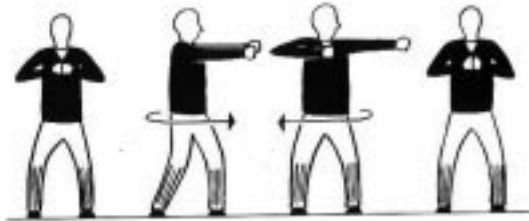
Lower your hands down to your sides again.

### Enhancements

*Exhale* as you raise your hands above your head and rise up and *inhale* as you come down again.

*Exhale* as you lean to the left or right and *inhale* as your return to center.

## Second Piece: Draw the Bow to Shoot the Hawk



Widen your stance so that your feet are about three feet apart and parallel. Squat down with tailbone tucked forward slightly so that your back is vertical (full horse position in martial arts).

Bring your hands up to your chest.

Swivel your hips and extend your arms to the left, and then turn back to center as if you were drawing a bow. Return your hands to your chest.

Then turn and shoot the bow to the right.

### Enhancements

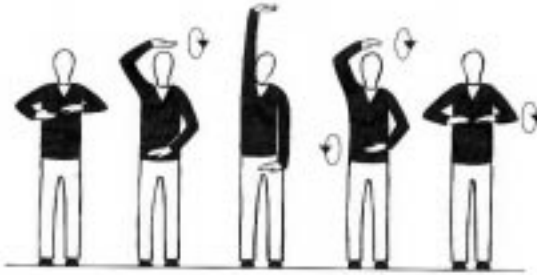
*Inhale* as you turn to each side, *exhale* as you draw the bow.

Most of the movement comes from turning the hips, not from using the arms.

Keep the body straight and the weight evenly distributed on both legs.

Feel that you are drawing a strong bow. Keep your eyes on the distant “hawk” that you are shooting.

## Third Piece: Separating Heaven and Earth



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width apart.

Raise your hands, palms up, to the level of the stomach.

Raise your left arm, palm up, pushing above your head, and at the same time press down with your right arm, palm down. The hands should move up and down the center of the body.

Then change hands so the right hand pushes up while the left hand presses down.

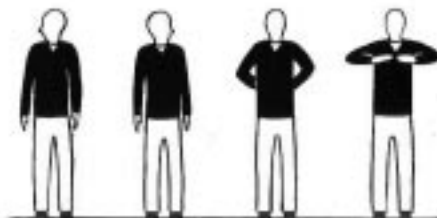
### Enhancements

*Exhale* as you separate, *inhale* as you return.

Feel your hands pushing against resistance, but do not tense the muscles.

As you stretch your arms upward, you may stretch the same leg downwards to increase the extension. Let the movement come from within the chest.

## Fourth Piece: Looking Backwards



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width.

Turn your head to the left and look backward as you exhale.

Turn your head back to center as you inhale, and continue on to the right and look backward as you exhale. Do this three (twelve) times.

Then place your palms on the kidneys and do another set, looking left and then right three (twelve) times.

Then raise the hands to chest level, with palms up, forming a horizontal circle in front of you, and do a third set, looking left and then right three (twelve) times.

### Enhancements

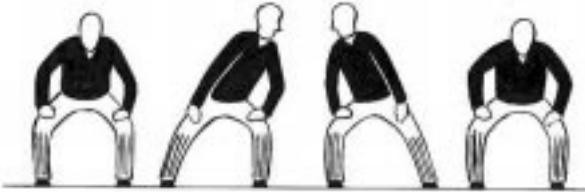
*Exhale* as you look backward, *inhale* as you return to center.

As you turn the head, keep a soft open gaze in the eyes

Lead the *qi* from the lower *dantien* to the bubbling wells and groin as you exhale and turn to each side, and lead the *qi* back to your *dantien* as you inhale and return to center.



## **Fifth Piece: Sway the Head and Swing the Tail**



Step your right leg to the right to widen your stance to about four feet. Squat down with tailbone tucked forward slightly so that the back is vertical.

Place your hands on your knees with thumbs pointing outwards and the fingers on the inside of the thighs just above the knees.

Sway your head and swing your tail by drawing your weight with the left leg as you turn the hips to the left. Keep the left knee directly over the left toes.

Return to center and then continue on to sway your head to the right, drawing with the right leg so the weight is on the right foot. Keep the right knee over the right toes.

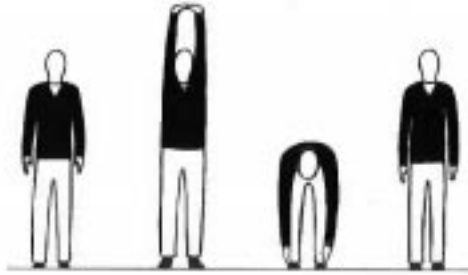
### **Enhancements**

*Exhale* as you turn to the side, *inhale* as you return to center.

Turn from the hips. Look in the direction of the turn and let the ribs stretch. In this movement particularly, avoid straining or overextending the body.

Place the attention on the bubbling wells.

## Sixth Piece: Two Hands Hold the Feet



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width.

Raise your arms above your head with palms facing up, as if you were lifting something.

Lower chin to chest and slowly bend forward with a flexible back, vertebra by vertebra, like a blade of grass.

Grasp your feet and then push up into your lower back slightly for a couple of seconds.

Slowly stand upright again, keeping the spine flexible, keeping your chin to your chest until you are upright with hands above your head.

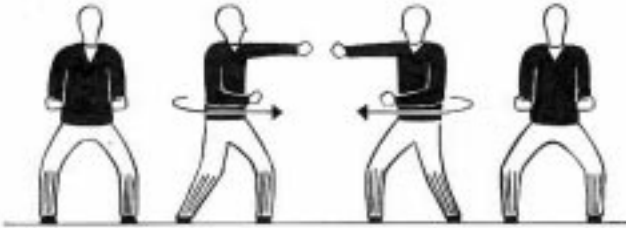
Bring hands down in front again.

### Enhancements

*Exhale* as you raise your arms above your head and *inhale* as you bend forward. *Exhale* as you pull up on your feet and *inhale* as you return to standing, and exhale as you lower your arms to your sides.

Place your attention on your kidneys as you raise your arms, and on your bubbling wells as you grasp your feet.

## Seventh Piece: Screw the Fist with Fiery Eyes



Step your right leg to the right to widen your stance. Squat down with tailbone tucked forward slightly so that your back is vertical. Your feet are three feet apart and parallel.

Raise your fists to your sides.

Turn from the hips to the left and extend your left arm as if punching, rotating the fist 180° clockwise. Your right arm remains at your waist.

Return to center and then continue to the right, extending your right arm, rotating 180° counterclockwise.

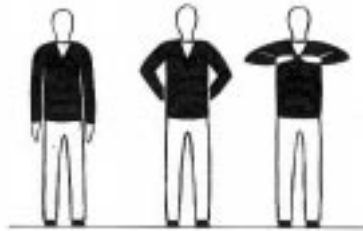
### Enhancements

*Exhale* as you punch and *inhale* as you return to center.

Do not lean into or away from the punch. Swivel from the hips while maintaining your center of gravity and remaining vertical.

Glower with fiery eyes in the direction of the extended arm. Keep the fists loose and avoid locking the arm straight.

## **Eighth Piece: Rocking the Bubbling Well**



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width.

Rise up slightly onto your bubbling wells for a moment, and then return back down.

Then place your palms on the kidneys and do a second set of three (twelve) repetitions. See note at beginning about number of repetitions.

Then raise your hands, palms up, into horizontal circle at chest level, and do a third set of three (twelve) repetitions.

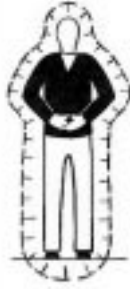
### **Enhancements**

*Exhale* as you rise and *inhale* as you lower.

To maintain your center of gravity throughout the movement, do not rise up too far onto your toes or lean back too far onto your heels. Rather than trying to standing on your toes, just let your navel move forward an inch or two.

Keep your knees slightly bent.

## Conclusion: Balancing Energy



Stand naturally with feet parallel and shoulder-width.

Place your palms one on top of the other at the level of your *dantien*; your thumbs are at the level of your navel.

Feel energy in the *dantien* radiate slowly out, out through your arms and legs, out through the torso and the head, in all directions.

Feel energy radiate out through all the pores of your skin, out a few inches or more, so that you are enveloped by warm radiant energy.

Rest, feeling this energy radiating around and through your entire body for a few moments.

To conclude the eight pieces of brocade, bring the palms together at chest height and bow.

## Resources

- ◆ *Eight Simple Qigong Exercises for Health: The Eight Pieces of Brocade* (book and video)
- ◆ *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*

Both books and the video by Dr. YANG, Jwing-Ming.  
Available from Dr. Yang's Martial Arts Association  
(YMAA) [www.ymaa.com](http://www.ymaa.com)

- ◆ *Eight Section Brocade*  
[www.egreenway.com/taichichuan/esb.htm](http://www.egreenway.com/taichichuan/esb.htm)
- ◆ *Cloud Hands: Taijiquan and Qigong*  
[www.egreenway.com/taichichuan/index33.htm](http://www.egreenway.com/taichichuan/index33.htm)  
Webpages by Michael P. Garofalo.

- ◆ *Qigong Empowerment: A Guide to Medical, Taoist, Buddhist, and Wushu Energy Cultivation*

Book by LIANG, Shou-Yu and WU, Wen-Ching  
available from Way of the Dragon  
[www.waydragon.com](http://www.waydragon.com)

- ◆ Qigong Association of America [www.qi.org](http://www.qi.org)
  - ◆ Qigong Institute [www.qigonginstitute.org](http://www.qigonginstitute.org)
- These websites include directories of teachers.

**The mind moves the *qi*...**

**Circulate the *qi* throughout the body, and direct it without obstruction, so that it can easily follow the mind.**

**To become nimble the mind-intent and *qi* must interchangeably respond to each other, and achieve the most subtle pliability...**

**The energy is issued from the spine... first in the mind, then in the body...**

**Constantly relax the abdomen...**

**Seek to penetrate the *qi* into the bone...**

*-- from Mental Elucidation of the Thirteen  
Kinetic Postures by the Immortal Wang  
Chung-yueh*