

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS ON BONE MARROW CLEANSING AND THE EIGHTEEN- LOHAN ART



QUESTION 1

Is Bone Marrow Cleansing a skill or a technique or both?

I believe Bone Marrow Cleansing belongs to the highest level of Chi Kung training. Why is this so?

— Sifu Andrew Barnett

Bone Marrow Cleansing is a skill. This skill can be attained using different techniques. This was a main reason why there were no records of how Bone Marrow Cleansing could be performed, which in turn set a long debate whether Bodhidharma actually taught Bone Marrow Cleansing.

Bodhidharma taught three arts at the Shaolin Temple, namely Eighteen Lohan Hands, Sinew Metamorphosis and Bone Marrow Cleansing. There was no debate on whether Eighteen Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis were taught by Bodhidharma. This was because as Eighteen Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis refer to techniques which have form, there are records of how these arts were practiced.

Let us take as an example "Lifting the Sky", which is the first technique of Eighteen Lohan Hands. We can show in pictures or words how "Lifting the Sky" is performed. Similarly, as "Flicking Fingers", which is the first of the twelve exercises in Sinew Metamorphosis, is a technique and has form, we can show how it is practiced. But Bone Marrow Cleansing, being a skill, has no definite form. Hence, we cannot show how it is practiced.

An analogy will make this clearer. Executing a punch using the technique "Black Tiger Steals Heart" can be recorded in a picture because "Black Tiger Steals Heart" has form. But executing a punch using internal force cannot be shown because using internal force is a skill and has no form.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are quite clear about the difference between techniques and skills. But most other chi kung and kungfu practitioners may not differentiate between techniques and skills.

The advantage, of course, goes beyond understanding why there were no records of how Bone Marrow Cleansing was practiced. Because we appreciate the difference, we are able to get a lot of benefits in a very short time. Others who are not aware of the difference may practice the techniques correctly but derive no benefit because they lack the necessary skills. This, in fact, is what happens to most chi kung and kungfu practitioners today.

There are five levels of energy flow: at the levels of the skin, the flesh, the meridians, the organs and the bone marrow. Bone Marrow Cleansing works at the highest level.

We should note that "bone marrow" in this context does not refer literally to bone marrow only. It includes the nervous system and the brain. Hence, Bone Marrow Cleansing is cleansing the whole nervous system.

Bone Marrow Cleansing belongs to the highest level because energy flowing along the bone marrow or nerves is the highest level of a practitioners normal energy flow development. When he first generates an energy flow, it flows at his skin level. He may feel as if insects crawling over his skin.

The energy soaks into his flesh, making him charged with energy. Then he progresses to energy flowing in his meridians, overcoming illness and giving him good health. At the next level, energy flows into his organs, giving him vitality and longevity. At the highest level, energy flows in his bone marrows, giving him mental clarity and spiritual joys.

QUESTION 2

What are the general and particular martial benefits of patterns from The Eighteen Lohan Art and what is the best way for a Shaolin Kung Fu practitioner to integrate the practice into his/her daily routine, assuming a force training method like Golden Bridge is already practiced?

— Sifu Andy Cusick

It was precisely for better martial performance that the Eighteen Lohan Hands called Shi Ba Luo Han Sou, gradually evolved into the Eighteen-Lohan Art, called Shi Ba Luo Han Gong.

Bodhidharma first taught the Eighteen Lohan Hands to the Shaolin monks to strengthen them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually so as to better attain Enlightenment.

Later, over a period of centuries, the exercises in the Eighteen Lohan Hands were gradually modified by martial monks, many of whom were generals before, to suit their martial background.

Relatively speaking, the Eighteen Lohan Hands were more for developing and maintaining health, whereas the Eighteen-Lohan Art was more for developing internal force for martial purposes. This did not mean that the Eighteen Lohan Hands were not helpful to martial artists, or the Eighteen-Lohan Art not contributing to health. The difference of benefits between the two arts was that of emphasis and not of nature.

In general, the martial benefits of the Eighteen-Lohan Art can be classified into three groups. Patterns 1 to 6 are excellent for developing internal force, Patterns 7 to 12 for exploding force, and Patterns 13 to 16 for balance and agility. Again the classification is relative. Patterns 1 to 6, for example, are also helpful for exploding force and developing balance and agility, but if all other factors were equal, they are most cost-effective for developing internal force.

Apart from these holistic benefits, each pattern in the Eighteen-Lohan Art may be used for some particular combat situations. If an opponent grips both your hands, for example, you may release the grip and attack his throat by using the first pattern, "Lohan Worships Buddha". In the hands of a master, "Old Monk Grinds Rice" found in Pattern 8 can be used to counter any attacks! The last pattern, "Swallow Flies through Clouds", has many sophisticated combat applications, like simultaneously striking an opponent while he attempts to attack your lower body.

There are numerous ways to practice the Eighteen-Lohan Art to derive its best result. Which would be the best way depends on some factors, like a practitioner's developmental stage, its needs and aspirations. Moreover, as there are 18 patterns in the art, there are also numerous ways to train them, like only one pattern per session, some of the patterns or all the patterns.

Most schools today as well as in the past do not have many force training

methods to choose from. Hence, they have to practice the Eighteen-Lohan Art everyday, and they usually practice all the patterns because the force they derive from the art is not very powerful.

But we in Shaolin Wahnam are very special. Other people will find it hard to believe and often accuse us of being boastful, but it is true that we can develop more internal force practice one pattern for 10 minutes than most other students practice all the patterns for one hour! Thus, we do not have to practice all the patterns in one training session; we practice just one or some patterns. Once a while we may practice all the patterns for review. Moreover, not only we have a wide choice of force training methods, we actually derive more benefits by practice different methods.

Hence, for a typical Shaolin Wahnam student who intends to use Eighteen-Lohan Art as his main force training method, he would get the best results by training the following way. His daily force training session is about 15 to 50 minutes. He should train one, two or three patterns from the Eighteen-Lohan Art about 6 or 7 out of 10 training sessions. For the remain 3 or 4 training sessions, he can train many other force-training methods, like Golden Bridge, One-Finger Shooting Zen or Triple Stretch. Generally he uses one force training method for one training session, but sometimes he may use two or even three different methods for the same session.

In this way he benefit most from accumulated effect as well as spread and depth. But the most important is that he follows the three golden rules of training, namely don't worry, don't intellectualize, and enjoy the practice.

QUESTION 3

Is it possible to transfer the skill of Bone Marrow Cleansing into Kung Fu and healing? What would be the benefits?

Could you kindly explain the differences (in terms of aims, objectives and benefits) between our Chi Kung Sets in Shaolin Wahnam, especially those of 18 Lohan Hands and 18 Lohan Arts?

— Sifu Anton Schmick

As both kungfu and chi kung healing will become better with an increase of internal force, and as Bone Marrow Cleansing is a powerful exercise to increase internal force, practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing will improve kungfu performance and healing result.

For example, before practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing, a kungfu exponent may lack power in his defence and attack. Practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing can give him the power to make his defence and attack effective. Before practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing, a healer may become tired easily if he channels energy to help his patients. Practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing can give him the power to be more effective in his energy channelling.

With this background we can now look more specifically at the skills derived from Bone Marrow Cleansing than can directly transferred to kungfu and healing to improve their results.

The specific skills in Bone Marrow Cleansing are related to the five levels of energy flow, namely along the skin, the muscles, the meridians, the organs and the bones and bone marrow,

With the skill of generating energy flow along the skin, a kungfu exponent would be better able to sense an opponent when their arms are in contact. The skill of generating energy in his muscles makes the kungfu exponent powerful and makes his attack and defence movements more effective. The skill of generating energy along his meridians enables him to channel his energy more easily to various parts of his body, especially to his arms and hands, for combat as well as to clear internal injuries.

The skill of generating energy to his organs enables him to clear injuries at the organs as well as to strengthen them for general efficiency for combat. The skill to generate energy along his bones and bone marrow, which in Chinese medical paradigm includes the nervous system, is the most important. It provides him with a lot of internal force and mental clarity, and enhances his sensitivity and responses. It also gives him courage and moral integrity, which are very important to the development of a high-level martial artists, though this may not be obvious to many ordinary people.

The beneficial transfer of skills from Bone Marrow Cleansing to healing is not so obvious and direct, but is nevertheless present. The skills of generating energy flow along the skin, the muscles and in the organs give a healer radiant health

and vitality, thus enhancing the confidence of his patients. The skill of generating energy flow along the meridians enables him to understand better energy blockage in his patients. The skill of generating energy flow along the bones and bone marrow gives him a lot of internal force, mental clarity and enhanced sensitivity that enable him to have more power in his energy transmission when needed, and to have a better understanding of his patients' problems and needs.

The general aims of the various types of chi kung are the same, namely for good health which includes overcoming pain and illness, for vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys irrespective of religion. The detailed objectives and benefits, however, may be different.

Relatively, the Eighteen Lohan Hands are for health, whereas the Eighteen-Lohan Art is for combat efficiency. This does not mean that the Eighteen Lohan Hands do not contribute to combat efficiency, and the Eighteen-Lohan Art does not contribute to health. The difference is one of emphasis. Indeed, the health benefits of the Eighteen-Lohan Art are generally more powerful than those of the Eighteen Lohan Hands. This is because demand as well as the level of health for a martial artists are higher than those of ordinary people.

This does not necessary mean that for one to overcome illness and maintain good health, it is more cost-effective to practice the Eighteen-Lohan Art than the Eighteen Lohan Hands. It is because for many people who are not trained in martial arts, the Eighteen-Lohan Art may be too powerful, and thus less effective than the Eighteen Lohan Arts for this purpose.

It is pertinent to mention, though many other people may not be happy with my following statements, that these observations are applicable to us who practice the Eighteen Lohan Hands and the Eighteen-Lohan Art as high-level chi kung. The observations do not apply to many other people who practice these arts as gentle physical exercise, in which case it does not matter much which of the two arts they practice, as the gentle physical exercises only give them benefits like loosening their muscles and make them more relaxed, but without giving them genuine chi kung benefits like good health, internal force and mental clarity.

For other chi kung arts, the objectives are usually indicated in the name of the arts, and their benefits related to the objectives, like Generating Energy Flow, Massaging Internal Organs, Cosmic Shower and Merging with the Cosmos. Their benefits are respectively overcoming illness, strengthening organs, purification and spiritual expansion.

The objectives of stance training are to develop internal force and mental clarity, and the benefits are to enhance combat efficiency as well as daily life. The objectives of the Small Universe and the Big Universe are to generate an energy flow around the ren and du meridians, and to let energy expands from the dan tian and beyond the body. The benefits are for longevity and spiritual expansion.

Please note that the names of some chi kung arts relate to techniques, like Eighteen Lohan Hands and Eighteen-Lohan Art, and some relate to skills, like

Generating Energy Flow and Merging with the Cosmos. Hence, exercises from Eighteen Lohan Hands and Eighteen-Lohan Art, for example, can be used to generate an energy flow to overcome illness, or to merge with the Cosmos for spiritual expansion.

QUESTION 4

I remember reading somewhere in some of your answers that Bone Marrow Cleansing was related to the famous story of the second Patriarch of Zen in China, Hui Ke, receiving the transmission from Bodhidharma, which he described as "receiving the marrow" of his teaching.

In other words, it was more than just symbolic use of words when Bodhidharma said that Hui Ke had the Bone Marrow of his teaching. Can you please elaborate on this relationship between this story and the Bone Marrow Qigong skill?

— Sifu Daniel Perez

Before he returned home, which may be interpreted as Nirvana, Bodhidharma asked his students to tell him their understanding of his teaching.

One student said that Bodhidharma's teaching was not bound by words. Bodhidharma replied that this student had received his skin.

Another student said that his teaching was like a majestic glimpse of the realm of Akshobhya Buddha. Bodhidharma replied that the student had received his flesh.

A third student mentioned that the four "greats" (earth, water, wind, air) are all empty, and the five sense organs are actually without existence. Bodhidharma said that this student had received his bone.

Hui Ke, the most senior student, bowed deeply but said nothing. Bodhidharma said Hui Ke had received his marrow. He then passed his robe and bowl to Hui Ke and named Hui Ke as the successor, becoming the Second Patriarch of Zen.

In chi kung philosophy, chi flows at five levels: the levels of skin, flesh, meridians, internal organs and bone marrow. In the traditional Chinese medical paradigm, "bone marrow" is not just bone marrow. It includes the nervous system.

When Bodhidharma said that Hui Ke had received his marrow, he meant that Hui Ke had received his deepest teaching. It was not that Bodhidharma taught his students at different levels. He taught them all the same way, but due to their different developmental stage, the different students received the same teaching at different levels.

This is a hallmark of great teachers, and we in Shaolin Wahnam have this experience. The same material is taught in a chi kung, Shaolin or Taijiquan class which often ranges from fresh beginners to masters. The students benefit a lot because of the masters' presence, but the masters are the ones who benefit the most.

Let us examine the students' answers above, and why Bodhidharma rated them the way he did.

Saying that Bodhidharma's teaching was not bound by words showed only an intellectual understanding but not direct experience. He had just entered the path. A modern analogy is a Iron Wire practitioner saying that Iron Wire is a

powerful internal art, but he has not developed substantial internal force yet.

Saying that Bodhidharma's teaching was like a majestic glimpse of the realm of Akshobhya Buddha showed a Hinayana view, which Mahayana Buddhists regarded as only the preliminary teaching. Hinayana Buddhists knew that the self was an illusion but thought that dharma, or sub-atomic particles, were real, hence they had a glimpse of Akshobhya Buddha's realm. It is analogous to an Iron Wire practitioner having internal force and using it well in combat but does not apply it to enrich his daily life.

Saying that the four "greats" or dharma that made up the phenomenal world are all empty, and the five sense organs are without existence showed a deeper Mahayana attainment that both self and phenomena are illusions. Yet this was not the deepest attainment because the student still used verbalizations, which would start the process of continuous thoughts resulting in the phenomenal world. As an analogy it is like an Iron Wire practitioner who enhances both his combat efficiency and daily life with internal force, but his internal force is dependent on his Iron Wire training.

By saying nothing Hui Ke showed his attainment of Bodhidharma's deepest teaching, where even verbalization was eliminated, indicating that Cosmic Reality is all "empty". It is analogous to a martial artist who having developed tremendous internal force from Iron Wire training applies it to enrich both his combat efficiency and daily life, but is not dependent on any form for further development and application of internal force.

QUESTION 5

Does adding some external training to go with our internal training add balance to our training and therefore improve our development?

For example, If we use some of the 18 Lohan Art exercises to develop internal force, will we get even more benefit if, on some of the days, we also practice external training such as punching with stone locks, gripping jars or rolling bamboo?

— Sifu Mark Blohm

Yes, adding some external training to our internal training will add balance as well as improve our development.

I clearly remember my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, saying that all great arts are both internal and external. They are also both hard and soft. At the highest level, it is internal and external, hard and soft at the same time, not first internal then external, or first hard then soft, and vice versa.

Practicing external training methods like punching with stone locks, gripping jars or rolling bamboo will enhance internal training methods like Eighteen-Lohan Art, Eighteen Lohan Hands, One Finger Shooting Zen and Iron Wire.

Besides adding external training methods like above, we may also consider the external and internal aspects of a particular internal training method.

Let us take as an example the first exercise of the Eighteen-Lohan Art, "Lohan Worships Buddha". The physical form of the technique is external, whereas the energy flow which results in internal force is internal. We need the external form to work the internal energy flow.

Suppose we leave aside the external form. Because of our skills, we can still generate an energy flow without using external form. But the benefit will not be as good as if we use the external form. Not only we do not derive the benefit of the external form, like loosening leg muscles, the internal force derived may also not be as powerful.

On the other hand, because of our skills in internal force training when we perform an external training method like punching with stone locks, our benefit will be much more than practitioners who lack skills in internal force training.

The other practitioners use muscular strength in their punching, whereas we use chi flow. The others will be tired after the training because they expend energy, whereas we become more energetic after the training because cosmic energy flows into us. The others will be mentally stressful after the strenuous exercise, whereas we shall be mentally fresh because our chi flow does our work.

This is another good example of the great advantage of spread and depth.

QUESTION 6

What might be a good practice program for a Chi Kung practitioner who has the aim of achieving harmonious energy flow at all five levels of skin, flesh, meridians, organs, and bone marrow?

Will the consistent practice of Bone Marrow Cleansing alone enable a student to achieve this aim, or is it more of a specialized skill, with less holistic results than say, self manifested chi flow?

With this query in mind, how will an understanding of spread and depth enrich our practice of Bone Marrow Cleansing?

— Max

If the practitioner knows only Bone Marrow Cleansing, he has no other choice but to practice Bone Marrow Cleansing everyday. However, he can operate at five different levels. Initially he should spend about 5 days a week focusing on the first level, the level of the skin, with the remaining 2 days on the other four levels. When he has attained a reasonably high standard on the first level, he would then spend about 5 days a week on the second level, the level of the flesh, with the remaining 2 days on the other four levels. In this way he progressively attains a reasonably high standard on all the five levels. After this, he can practice at any level he likes but with an emphasis on the level of bone marrow.

If he knows other types of chi kung, he should spend about 5 days a week on Bone Marrow Cleansing and the other 2 days on the other types of chi kung. For the 5 days on Bone Marrow Cleansing, he should spend about 4 days on the first level, and 1 day on the remaining four levels. In this way he progresses to all the five levels. When he has attained proficiency at all the five levels, he can practice Bone Marrow Cleansing at any level but with an emphasis on the level of bone marrow, or any other types of chi kung on any day he likes.

Yes, the consistent practice of Bone Marrow cleansing alone can enable a student to achieve the aim of achieving harmonious energy flow at all the five levels.

Relatively speaking, Bone Marrow Cleansing is more of a specialized skill with less holistic results than self manifested chi movement and generating chi flow.

An understanding of spread and depth can much enrich the practice of Bone Marrow Cleansing in an reactive as well as a proactive way. In the reactive way the practitioner does not have to do anything special. Just because of his understanding and practice of other types of chi kung, his Bone Marrow Cleansing would be better. For example, if he has practiced Iron Wire, the tremendous internal force of his Iron Wire training will give him better result in all the five levels of Bone Marrow Cleansing.

In the reactive way he has to apply the skills he has gained in other types of chi kung to enhance his Bone Marrow Cleansing. For example, he may employ the

skill of consolidating force gained in Iron Wire training to direct his energy to flow in his flesh in Bone Marrow Cleansing.

QUESTION 7

The Eighteen Lohan Arts, I have read, are generally divided into a section for generating internal force, exploding internal force, and developing agility. Would past practitioners have eventually learnt all eighteen exercises of this set, or perhaps just one or two exercises of each "section," or even just focused on one for their martial arts career?

Much has been said about the wonderful skill of Shaolin Wahnam to generate an energy flow as well as consolidate it into internal force. Do the Eighteen Lohan Arts mostly generate "flowing" force as in Taijiquan or "consolidated" force as in Hoong Ka?

— Frederich Chu

Yes, the eighteen patterns in the Eighteen-Lohan Art can be divided into three groups. The emphasis of the first group of Patterns is for developing force, the second group of Patterns 7 to 12 for exploding force, and the third group of Patterns 13 to 18 for balance and agility. As an analogy with cash flow, first we learn how to make a lot of money, then we learn how to spend our money wisely, and thirdly we learn to have balance and agility with our money.

The exercises are usually taught as a set. Hence past practitioners would have learnt all the eighteen exercises instead of just a few. They might take a long time to learn all the exercises. I don't mean to be presumptuous, but I believe we are more cost-effective than past practitioners in learning them. Our students could learn to develop force, explode force and attain balance and agility in just a day or two, but past practitioners, including Shaolin monks, would need at least a few months, though their attainment would be higher than ours. In other words, we learn faster, but eventually they attained more.

The ability of our Shaolin Wahnam instructors as well as students to generate an energy flow and consolidate it into internal force is unbelievable. I myself could not do as well in my early days of teaching. My early students, for example, took about 4 to 6 months of training before they could generate an energy flow. This itself was remarkable, considering that even masters took a year or two. Hence, when I first introduced chi kung to the public, teaching the Eighteen Lohan Hands in six months, many people, including masters, thought I was crazy. Learning chi kung took years, they said.

Now many people also think I am crazy, teaching Generating Energy Flow in one day. It is too outlandish that sceptics do not even bother to find out whether our claim is true.

Once I could generate an energy flow, consolidating it into internal force became easier for me. It took me a few months. But now, with my experience and understanding of underlying philosophy, I could help students achieve the same result in just one day, as in the Iron Wire course in Barcelona! No wonder many people call me a liar.

The Eighteen-Lohan Art is comprehensive. Some exercises generate flowing

force as in Taijiquan, and some exercises generate consolidated force as in Hoong Ka Iron Wire. And still others generate force that lies somewhere in between, as in One-Finger Shooting Zen.

For example, Old Monk Grinds Rice Mill is an excellent pattern that not only develop flowing Taijiquan force, but also illustrates Taijiquan mechanics and typical Taijiquan combat application. It is amazing that one can get the essence of Taijiquan in just one pattern.

In contrast to Old Monk Grinds Rice Mill is Big Bird Flaps Wings, which exemplifies Shaolin methods of generating and exploding force. It is hard, yet flowing, whereas the force generated and exploded by Old Monk Grinds Rice Mill is soft and flowing.

On the other hand, Big Boss Lifts Bronze Vessels, using the triple-stretch approach, generates consolidated force like in Iron Wire. Reverse Hanging of Double Hooks, which uses the Sinew Metamorphosis approach, also generates hard, consolidated force like that of Iron Wire, but the approach is different.

To top it all, Green Dragon Charges at Face, which happens to be my favourite, exemplifies the summation and climax of all these force generating and exploding methods. It is soft and flowing, yet tremendously powerful.

QUESTION 8

Are there specific aims and objectives we should/could define when including Bone Marrow Cleansing in our practice schedules?

— Sifu Andrew Barnett

Normally we set our aims and objectives first, then choose the best skills and techniques to practice to achieve the best results. We can do this quite well because we have a sound understanding of chi kung philosophy.

Suppose a practitioner is sick and wants to overcome his sickness. The best skill will be self-manifested chi movement. He can use any three techniques from the Eighteen Lohan Hands and perform them vigorous and continuously to generate a vigorous chi flow. This is an excellent choice as he knows that vigorous chi flow is effective for breaking through energy blockage, which is the root cause of his sickness.

Now he is healthy, and he wants mental clarity and a lot of energy so as to attain peak performance in his work and play. The best skills will be building mental clarity and developing internal force. An excellent exercise will be Golden Dragon Taps on Ground, or Flicking Fingers, from Sinew Metamorphosis.

Next, he wants to expand into the Cosmos, or a glimpse into the Supreme. An excellent skill will be Cosmic Breathing, and an excellent technique will be Dan Tian Breathing.

The above three examples exemplifies the three main levels of chi kung training, namely the health level, which includes overcoming illness and attaining vitality and longevity, the energy level which develops mental clarity and internal force, and the spiritual level for spiritual expansion.

If a practitioner is very skilful, he can choose just one technique and employ different skills to operate at the three different levels. For example, he may choose Lifting the Sky to go into a vigorous chi flow, to build mental clarity and internal force, or to expand into the Cosmos.

If a practitioner lacks the necessary philosophy, skills and techniques to make wise choices, he should choose wu-wei. He can practice any technique or techniques, and let the Universe Chi guide him.

Now let us reverse the procedure. We have the skills of Bone Marrow Cleansing in our practice schedule. What aims and objectives we should or could define?

Bone Marrow Cleansing can be operated at five different levels of skills - the level of the skin, the flesh, the meridians, the internal organs and the bone marrow. We can select various techniques to operate these various skills. In theory, any techniques can be used to operate any skills, but in practical terms certain techniques because of the special way they are performed are better suited for particular skills. Let us base our choice of techniques from the Eighteen Lohan Hands.

For the skill level, Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon are excellent choices as they spread energy all over the body. Nourishing Kidneys and Three Levels to Ground are not so appropriate as the former focuses on the kidneys and the latter on the legs. Objectives for practicing this level are to overcome skin diseases, to enhance blood circulation on the skin, and to have rosy skin. As the skin is the largest organ to protect the body, aims include enhancing immunity and to have a radiant appearance.

For the flesh level, Pushing Mountain and Separating Water are excellent choices, whereas Turning Head and Merry-Go-Round are not so appropriate. Objectives include toughening arms and legs, and increasing strength. Aims include increasing physical capacity and improving combat efficiency.

For the meridian level, Pushing Mountain and Deep Knee Bending are excellent, whereas Punching with Rounded Eyes and Rotating Knees are not as appropriate. Objectives are to spread warmth and to clear internal injuries. Aims are to promote good health, vitality and longevity, and to develop internal force.

For the internal organ level, Separating Water which affects the heart and lungs, and Merry-Go-Round which affects the spleen, stomach, kidney, gall-bladder, liver and kidneys, are excellent choices, whereas Drawing Knife and Dancing Crane are not as directly effective. Objectives include overcoming dysfunction of the respective organs and overcoming related emotional problems. Aims include promoting health and increasing vitality.

For the bone marrow level, Turning Head and Pushing Mountain are excellent, whereas Green Dragon and Nourishing Kidneys are not as effective. Objectives include cleansing nerves and generating a lot of internal heat. Aims include attaining mental clarity, and sharpening physiological and psychological functions.

Please note that whether the choice of certain patterns for the respective skills is excellent or less appropriate is relative. For example, for the skill of channelling energy to flow along the skin level, Nourishing Kidneys and Three Levels to Ground are relatively not as effective as Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon if all other factors were equal. But themselves, Nourishing Kidneys and Three Levels to Ground can generate energy flow along the skin level even by beginners, and masters employing these techniques can generate more energy along the skin than students using Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon.

Lifting the Sky and Carrying the Moon are all-round techniques. They are not only excellent for channelling energy at the skin level, but also at all levels.

For us in Shaolin Wahnam, it is needless to say that by performing the right techniques alone without the appropriate skills, practitioners may have benefits of gentle physical exercise like loosening joints and being relaxed, but they will not have chi kung benefits like overcoming illness, developing internal force and experiencing spiritual joys irrespective of for how long they practice. This is a fact that most chi kung practitioners today do not realize.

QUESTION 9

If someone was clearing what appeared to be a karmic blockage what would be the best level at which to practise Bone Marrow Cleansing?

— Sifu Barry Smale

The best level to clear karmic blockage is at the deepest level, i.e. the bone marrow level. Sometimes it may be cleared at the internal organ level. And sometimes if the cause is no longer valid and the effect manifested as physical blockage, it may be cleared at the meridian level.

Karma means cause and effect. If we plant a mango seed, for example, it will grow into a mango tree. Planting the seed is the cause, and growing into a tree is the effect. Hence, in general karma can occur in the past, the present or the future.

But when we talk about karmic blockage, we usually refer to causes that happened before a person was born but affect his present life unfavourably without him consciously realizing it. If they occurred in his present life when he was aware of them, even if he might forget them later on, we called them energy blockage, or just blockage.

For convenience, karmic blockage may be classified into three areas: while he was a foetus in his mother's womb, the genes he inherited from his parents or forefathers, and in one or more of his past lives. For example, while he was a foetus, his mother may experience shock which would affect his development as a foetus and he may be born with a defective kidney. Or he may inherit faulty genes from his parents which result in his being born with low intelligence. Or in a past life he was killed when an enemy drove a sword into his stomach, resulting in him having stomach pain or fear of knives for no apparent reasons.

Let us examine the above three examples.

In the first example, the shock experienced by his mother resulted in a person born with a defective kidney. Here the shock is no longer in him. It was borne by his mother. The effect of the shock, i.e. a defective kidney, is still in him. By generating energy flow at his defected kidney, he may rectify it and become healthy again.

However, in some cases, the shock might be imprinted in his defective kidney. He would need to not only rectify the physical defect but also clear the memory of the shock. In classical terms, he has to purify the spirit of the kidney.

Please note that "spirit" is "shen" in Chinese. Here it has no superstitious or religious connotation. But if "shen" is wrongly translated as "god" by writers who lack a deep understanding of chi kung philosophy, it would cause much confusion. Readers would be puzzled as what is actually meant by "purifying the god of the kidney". What it means is that the negative emotion of shock that was mixed with the energy that eventually formed the kidney and rendered it defective has to be cleared away besides rectifying the structural defect of the

kidney.

In the second example, inheriting faulty genes was the cause, and having low intelligence was the effect. Here both the cause, i.e. the faulty genes, and the effect, i.e. low intelligence, are still in the person. He must treat the cause, operate at the bone marrow level. If he only treats the effect, he would not have lasting cure. Chi kung cannot change his genes but it can rectify its faulty. Suppose his genes are supposed to give him an intelligence level of 100, but because some genes are faulty, the genes give him an intelligence level of 95. Chi kung cannot change his genes and give him an intelligence level of 110, but it can rectify the fault to restore his intelligence level of 100. In classical terms, this is harmonizing his pre-natal chi.

In the third example, the cause was a sword thrust into his stomach in a past life, and the effect is his feeling of pain or fear of knives for no apparent reason in this life. Although he has a new body in this life, his spirit or consciousness is still the same. The traumatic experience in his past life made a deep imprint on his spirit. He has to treat the cause, i.e. erasing the imprint. And not treat the effect, i.e. trying to stop his stomach pain or explaining to him that he needs not be afraid of knives. The level to operate on is the bone marrow. By cleansing his bone marrow, he can erase the imprint, and he will no longer have stomach pain or fear of knives.

QUESTION 10

Until 2012, Sifu has not taught Bone Marrow Cleansing. Why has Sifu now decided to do so?

— Sifu Andrew Barnett

While the Winter Camp in Norway organized by Markus and Omar in January 2012 was the first time my teaching of Bone Marrow Cleansing was widely made known to our Shaolin Wahnam Family, followed by many Bone Marrow Cleansing courses in many other countries, it was taught in the Spanish Summer Camp in Tarragona organized by Adalia in 2011. Even long before this, Bone Marrow Cleansing was taught not as a complete course by itself but as part of Massaging Internal Organs.

Like other courses as well as our general development of our school, the reason for introducing Bone Marrow Cleansing into our curriculum is to meet expedient needs. Apart from giving a straight-forward answer, using Andrew's question as an opportunity to give a brief survey of how the various courses came into our school would be more interesting and illuminating.

When I first taught at the Shaolin Wahnam Association in the middle 1980s, which is now defunct, I taught Lifting the Sky to all beginners like a "warm-up" exercise, and Separating Water and Big Wind Mill to advanced students to enhance their internal force. When I first taught chi kung to the public in the late 1980s under the name of Shaolin Wahnam Institute, I taught the Eighteen Lohan Hands in 6 months. Some masters were angry that I taught chi kung to the public, especially to non-Chinese (though it was my chi kung and not theirs), and many people thought I was crazy to teach it in six months, as practicing chi kung would take years.

Nevertheless, I had wonderful results, with students reporting that they overcame so-called incurable diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, rheumatism, arthritis, and cancer. Interestingly, depression was unknown in Asian society then. I even had difficulty finding a term for depression in Chinese. I learned about depression as a clinical disease only when I went to the West!

Later due to demand for more advanced courses, I add Small Universe for 6 months, and then Big Universe for 6 months. At that time, the theme of Shaolin Wahnam Institute was "Breaking through the Small Universe enables you to overcome all diseases, Breaking through the Big Universe enables you to live healthily beyond a hundred years." Now, with improvement in our attainment, we can update the saying to "Breaking through the Small Universe enables you to live healthily beyond a hundred years, breaking through the Big Universe enables you to realize you never die." Later, because of improvement in my teaching methodology, I shortened the Eighteen Lohan Hands, Small Universe and Big Universe courses to 3 months each.

Like in the Shaolin Wahnam Association before, some students in Shaolin

Wahnam Institute whom I actually saved betrayed me. So I left to teach in Australia in the early 1990s, invited by a university professor there who earlier learned from me in Malaysia. I taught 10 exercises from the Eighteen Lohan Hands in 10 days, then shortened the course to 3 days. The results, as expected, were wonderful. History repeated itself. The university professor betrayed me, so I stopped going to Australia, until Neil and then Jeffrey invited me there to re-open a new chapter.

Chinese belief says that one must pass three hurdles before he can accomplish great things. I did that. I survived three betrayals by my own students whom I had saved from suffering and dying, and whom I trusted. In mid 1990s, Douglas invited me to Spain. It was an instant success, and from Spain we have now spread to over 50 countries.

When I first taught in Spain as well as in Portugal, Germany and Austria, I taught 6 exercises from the Eighteen Lohan Hands in 8 hours. There was no special name for the course, it was just called Shaolin Cosmos Chi Kung, and the practice consisted mainly of dynamic patterns and self-manifested chi movement. Suggested by Jean from Toronto, I later shortened the instructional material to 3 exercises, our wondrous Lifting the sky, Pushing Mountain and Carrying the Moon, and the time to 6 hours. It was the first clear indication that "less is more".

Later, in response to demand for more advanced courses, I added another course, calling the original course "Generating Energy Flow" and the new course "Massaging Internal Organs".

I taught three patterns from the Eighteen Lohan Hands in the "Massaging Internal Organs" course - Turning Head for cleansing the nerves (called Bone Marrow in classical Chinese terms), Merry-Go-Round for massaging the stomach, and Nourishing Kidneys for massaging the kidneys. I found nerve cleansing too delicate and to avoid possible deviation by students, I soon substituted it with Separating Water to massage the lungs.

As more senior students returned to learn and the demand for more courses increased, more courses like Cosmic Shower, Internal Force, Selection from Sinew Metamorphosis, Abdominal Breathing, Dan Tian Breathing, Cosmic Breathing, and Merging with the Cosmos were gradually added. On some rare occasions I also taught Shaolin Wahnam Eighteen Chi Kung Techniques and Self-Manifested Chi Movement. And sometimes I taught the complete set of the Eighteen Lohan Hands (in 3 Parts).

When Roland invited me to teach Praying Mantis Kungfu in 2010 in Switzerland, I included the Eighteen-Lohan Art, which I believe was the main internal force training method at the northern Shaolin Temple at the time. Since then Eighteen-Lohan Art has become very popular as a chi kung course (in 3 Parts) in many countries.

In 2011 Adalia suggested Bone Marrow Cleansing from the Spanish Summer Camp. There was no record on how Bodhidharma taught Bone Marrow Cleansing to the Shaolin monks. But from indirect references, I believe that by

employing appropriate techniques from the Eighteen Lohan Hands or Sinew Metamorphosis, the Shaolin monks could channel energy flow along their bone marrow, which in modern language refers also to the nerves.

There is a famous story that when assessing the progress of his students, Bodhidharma remarked that they attained the level of the skin, flesh, bone and bone marrow. It is also an established chi kung concept that energy flows at five different levels, namely the skin, the flesh, the meridians, the internal organs and the bone marrow.

Linking the story and the concept together, I decided to make the Cleansing Bone Marrow course comprehensive to cover energy flow at all the five levels. In line with the Shaolin tradition, I chose appropriate patterns from the Eighteen Lohan Hands or Sinew Metamorphosis. This might not be what or how Bodhidharma taught Bone Marrow Cleansing, but in the spirit of Zen, this does not matter, because the external form is not important but the essence of Bodhidharma's teaching must be there.

QUESTION 11

If your main concern is combat efficiency, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of Bone Marrow Cleansing over One finger Shooting Zen or Golden Bridge?

— Sifu Roeland Dijkema

All the three internal force training methods - Bone Marrow Cleansing, One-Finger Shooting Zen, and Golden Bridge - are excellent for combat efficiency as well as good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys. It is important to bear this in mind when we single out combat efficiency as the criterion of comparison among the three arts.

It is also importance to bear in mind that the advantages and disadvantages mentioned are relative. To say that Bone Marrow Cleansing is advantageous or disadvantageous in a certain aspect of combat over One-Finger Shooting Zen and Golden Bridge, it does not mean that this aspect, whether advantageous or disadvantageous, is not found in the latter two arts.

The third point to bear in mind, of course, is the presumption that all other factors were equal. If we say that Bone Marrow Cleansing is more advantageous than One-Finger Shooting Zen or Golden Bridge in one particular aspect, it is presumed that all other factors were equal, which is seldom true in real life. If a One-Finger Shooting Zen practitioner is more skilful, he would have more benefit in the aspect in question than a Bone-Marrow Cleansing practitioner.

Bone Marrow Cleansing at the skin level makes a practitioner very sensitive in his arms. Hence, he will be more effective in sensing his opponent's movements as well as emotions when their arms are in contact. As mentioned above, this would be true when all other factors were equal. If a One-finger Zen practitioner or Golden Bridge practitioner has trained Wing Choon Sticking Hands or Taijiquan Pushing Hands, he would be able to sense his opponents more effectively despite having less sensitive arms.

Bone Marrow Cleansing at the flesh level make practitioners arms and body very powerful. The other two arts are also very powerful - even more powerful than practitioners who train specific external methods. In other words, the arms of practitioners of any of these three internal arts are more powerful than the arms of practitioners who train the external art of Iron Arm by striking poles. Practitioners of any of these three internal arts are able to take punches and kicks on their body without sustaining injury more effectively than those who train Iron Shirt by conditioning their body by repeated hitting. The reason is that the force and protection of the internal martial artists are from chi and radiate from inside, whereas the force and protection of the external martial artists are from conditioning and effected from outside.

But amongst these three internal arts, Bone Marrow Cleansing is relatively the most powerful in this aspect, followed by Golden Bridge, then by One-Finger Shooting Zen. This does not necessarily mean that Bone Marrow Cleansing is

better than the other two. If an opponent is stronger, Bone Marrow Cleansing practitioners would be hurt the most, Golden Bridge practitioners less, and One-Finger Shooting Zen practitioners the least.

Bone Marrow Cleansing at the meridian level is very effective in overcoming internal injuries sustain in combat. One-Finger Shooting Zen is also effective, but not as much as Bone Marrow Cleansing at the meridian level. Golden Bridge by itself may aggravate internal injuries. But chi flow induced by Golden Bridge can clear internal injuries. In this case, one performs Golden Bridge for a short while to produce enough internal force which he then uses for a vigorous chi flow. If he prolongs in his Golden Bridge training, the accumulated internal force would be detrimental to internal injuries.

Bone Marrow Cleansing at the internal organ level, when directed to the kidneys and gall bladder, make practitioners courageous. Being courageous certainly enhances combat efficiency. One-Finger Shooting Zen and Golden Bridge also bring such benefit, but are not as cost-effective. On the other hand, if it deviates into sheer bravado, it becomes disadvantageous.

Bone Marrow Cleansing at the bone marrow level cleanses nerves as well as strengthens bones, resulting in quick reflexes and righteousness. These qualities greatly enhance combat efficiency.

It is worthy of note that we are comparing five levels of skills in Bone Marrow Cleansing with the two techniques of One-Finger Shooting Zen and Golden Bridge where only one skill, i.e. developing internal force, is implied. In theory any technique can be used to generate the five levels of chi flow in Bone Marrow Cleansing, but in practice I choose the best techniques, which are Lifting the Sky to generate chi flow at the skin level, Separating Water to generate chi flow at the flesh level, Pushing Mountain to generate chi flow at the meridian level, Carrying the Moon to generate chi flow at the internal organ level, and Turning Head to generate chi flow at the bone marrow level. Hence, it is no surprise if you find there are more advantages in Bone Marrow Cleansing than in One-Finger Shooting Zen and Golden Bridge because we are comparing five techniques and five skills with two techniques and one skill.

Though it is not the best choice of techniques, but if a practitioner is skillful he can employ One-Finger Shooting Zen or Golden Bridge to generate chi flow at the five different levels. In other words, he uses the technique of One-Finger Shooting Zen or of Golden Bridge to operate the five skills of Bone Marrow Cleansing. In such a case, One-Finger Shooting Zen and Golden Bridge will have all the advantages mentioned above.