



Question and Answer Series
Cosmic Breathing
by Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Question 1

In which way/s has Cosmic Breathing contributed to your attainments and development in the 3 hallmarks of Shaolin Kungfu - combat efficiency, internal force and spiritual cultivation?

Santiago

Answer

Cosmic Breathing is a very advanced art. Most kungfu practitioners, even masters, do not have an opportunity to learn it. It is simply ridiculous that students in our school have a chance to learn Cosmic Breathing – and in an unbelievably short time!

One great advantage of Cosmic Breathing is that it contributes to all the three important dimensions of kungfu training, namely combat efficiency which is the primary aim of practicing any martial art, internal force which gives us good health, vitality, longevity as well as peak performance in daily life besides enhancing combat efficiency, and spiritual cultivation which ranges from being peaceful and happy to expanding into the Cosmos and returning to God the Holy Spirit or whatever term one calls the most noble and supreme achievement according to his own culture.

We in Shaolin Wahnam do not merely mention these noble aspirations but actually attain them according to our needs and developmental stage, except the most supreme achievement where the supreme being merges with the Cosmos and leaves the phenomenal world. It is simply ridiculous that we can attain all these achievements that are primary concerned with teaching kungfu and chi kung.

This incredible opportunity is even more ridiculous when we are aware that most martial art schools today do not even attain the most basic aim of self-defence, and most chi kung schools today do not even attain the most basic aim of good health. Of course, the mentioning of this fact is not to belittle others or glamorize ourselves. What other choose to believe and practice is their right, and none of our business. But it is worthwhile to remind our students, who have the good karma to learn from us, about this unbelievable opportunity.

It is also worthwhile, as it provides inspiration and guidance, how Cosmic Breathing has contributed to my own attainment and development in the three hallmarks of Shaolin Kungfu or any great kungfu, namely combat efficiency, internal force and spiritual cultivation.

To many people the obvious requirement for combat efficiency is to know the techniques for overcoming various combat situations. If an opponent gives us a kick or attempts to throw us onto the ground, for example, we must know how to counter his attack.

What many people may not realize is the necessary skills to apply these techniques effectively. All those who have practiced kungfu for some time would have learnt the techniques to overcome combat situations, though many students may not know the application and even some masters may not be able to apply them effectively!

Again, it may be necessary to emphasize that this statement is made in good faith, and is certainly not intended as a slight to these students and some masters. It is a fact today that many students practice kungfu techniques for demonstration and if they have to spar they would use Kick-Boxing and still receive a lot of blows. It is also a fact that some masters may be at a loss when Taekwondo exponents execute some kicks on them, or wrestlers attempt to shoot them onto the ground.

Many students may not know the application of the necessary techniques, but the masters know it as they can demonstrate their application with cooperative students. But they lack the skills to apply the techniques effectively in real combat.

The three main skills for effective combat are picture-perfect form, sufficient force and reasonable speed. More crucial than these main skills, though many people may not realize it, are calmness, mental clarity, spontaneous response, and real fighting experience.

The main skills are basic. Even when a person is calm and mentally clear, can react spontaneously and has fought frequently, but if he does not know the correct technique against a particular attack, or lack force and speed, he will not be able to counter the attack. On the other hand, even when he has the basic skills the factor that eventually decides victory is often the crucial skills, like being calm and mentally clear, responding spontaneously and having fighting experience.

As our school is noted for transference of learning, how can this understanding enrich our daily life? One example is as follows. You may be an expert in computer science. How well you make use of this basic skill is how successfully you convince your employer or your clients to purchase your service at a price you want. On the other hand, no matter how good you are in the crucial skills of marketing and convincing, if you don't have the basic skill of computer science, you have nothing to sell to your employer or clients.

Cosmic Breathing is excellent in enhancing both the basic skills and crucial skills for combat.

If one is panting for breath, he would be unable to attain picture-perfect form. When I perform Cosmic Breathing, panting for breath becomes irrelevant! I won't be panting for breath because I don't have to breathe like ordinary people do, i.e. breathing in and out air, which contains energy, through the nose and mouth.

Energy just flows in and out through my body without the need for normal breathing!

Cosmic Breathing provides me with tremendous internal force for combat. Internal force is consolidated from the energy derived from Cosmic Breathing, and exploded out in suitable patterns for combat.

I am also able to attain lightning speed in combat. Lightning speed is attained by using flowing energy, and not by using muscles. Not only it can be very fast, I don't become tired as no muscular tension is used. This flowing energy which gives me lightning speed is derived from Cosmic Breathing.

Besides contributing to my attainment of basic skills in picture-perfect form, tremendous internal force and lightning speed, Cosmic Breathing also contribute to my crucial skills of being calm and mentally clear, responding spontaneously and enhancing my fighting experience.

To perform Cosmic Breathing, one must be deep in a chi kung state of mind. Being in a chi kung state of mind, even at an elementary level, enables a person to be calm and have mental clarity. But Cosmic Breathing requires not just an elementary level of chi kung state of mind, but a deep one. Hence the attainment of calmness and mental clarity is tremendous.

When one performs Cosmic Breathing, he literally pulsates with the Cosmos. First he performs at an energy level, then he enters into a deep mind level. At the mind level, his movement can be at the speed of thought. Hence, his responses are tremendously fast.

For most martial artists, when they see an attack coming, they first conceptualize their counter, and then set their body and limbs to work on it. Their movement may be fast, but it is still at the physical level. For me, as soon as I see an attack,

often I can sense it before an opponent starts his physical movement, I just think of a response, and it is enacted instantly! The respond is at the mind level, though manifested physically.

Others reading this description may think it is a myth. But our students who have been exposed to our teaching will understand that I speak from experience.

I had much combat experience in my younger days, sparring and actual fighting with kungfu practitioners, other martial artists as well as masters. At that time I had not practiced Cosmic Breathing yet. I operated mainly at a physical level.

Since practicing Cosmic Breathing, I found my combat efficiency improved tremendous, though I sparred more with our family members than with people outside our school. Cosmic Breathing enabled me to progress from a physical level to an energy level, then to a mind level.

Some instructors confessed to me that they could not keep up with my kungfu progress. I told them honestly that they could because they attained in one month what it took me one year. But in reality there was a noticeable gap between their attainment and mine. I attributed it to the time of training. I had been training diligently for 69 years whereas they had spent less time in their training.

Answering this question highlights another reason for this attainment gap. As instructors caught up to the stage where I previously was, in less time than I took, I progressed to a new stage. And my progress was exponential. In other words, my progress in my recent 5 years was more than my progress in the previous 30 years. Moreover, my rate of progress was more than that of most instructors.

Does this mean that a student will never catch up with me? This is looking at the issue from a negative perspective. A Shaolin Wahnam perspective is the fact that a student can now attain in one year what it took me ten years. Another Shaolin

Wahnam perspective is that our students will derive benefits in a relatively short time what most other people may not have irrespective of how long they may train.

A helpful way to illustrate this exponential progress is to examine my kungfu development, which may be divided into three main stages, namely a student's stage, a master's stage and a supreme stage. They roughly correspond to my operation of kungfu at a physical level, an energy level and a mind level.

When I was learning kungfu from Uncle Righteousness and Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, I sought out kungfu practitioners and martial artists of other styles for sparring. I was also involved in a few real fights. I managed to remain undefeated, but this was due not to my combat efficiency but to hard work in knowing my opponents and preparing myself for the fight, and my scholar-warrior's strategy of not entering a fight hoping to win but entering a fight to secure victory.

At this time I operated at a physical level. If an opponent executed a side kick, for example, I would trapped his kicking leg using my double tiger-claw in a pattern known as "Two Tigers Subdue Dragon". If an opponent executed a roundhouse kick, followed by a reverse roundhouse kick, I would lean back my body in a pattern called "Tame Tiger with String of Beads" to avoid his first kick, and move to his back to strike him using the pattern "Double Dragons Cross Step" as he executed his second kick. I defeated my opponents using appropriate physical techniques. I called this the student's stage.

By the time I started teaching at Shaolin Wahnam Association, the fore-runner of our school, Shaolin Wahnam Institute, I had learned a great variety of combat applications from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam which I could effectively applied for any combat situation. But more significantly I had developed substantial internal force from the internal training of Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.

In combat I progressed from sparring with students to sparring with masters. With my knowledge of combat application, I could handle attacks from these masters, but looking back with hindsight, I believe it was my internal force that defeated them. When an opponent executed a low punch, for example, I gripped his arm using the pattern "Second Auntie Catches Crab", with my internal force penetrating into his vital points. His arm became numb, and even if he knew the counter, he was unable to do so. I called this the master's stage.

My kungfu performance, including combat with other people, at the student's stage and the master's stage was before my training of Cosmic Breathing. Cosmic Breathing improved my kungfu development from the master's stage to the supreme stage, where the mind, not just the physical or the energy, is the main factor.

This noticeable development, though gradual in its transition, occurred in the last ten years when my understanding of kungfu philosophy and advanced methods like Cosmic Breathing had tremendously improved my combat efficiency, internal force and spiritual cultivation.

I call this development the supreme stage. In combat, my mind has expanded to a level where I can sense an opponent's intentions and frustrate him even before he can make any moves. I still need the physical techniques of the student's stage, and the internal force of the master's stage, but it is mind that constitutes the decisive factor in victory. Cosmic Breathing contributed much in this direction.

Interestingly, my combat efficiency improves in reverse proportion to my keenness in combat. I was most keen to engage in sparring when I was at the student's level. At the master's level, I engaged in combat when situations were cordial. At the supreme level, I would avoid combat as best as possible – and so far I have been successful. I remember years ago reading a comment that in genuine kungfu training, one would avoid fighting the more combat efficient he

becomes. I did not expect at that time I would experience this development myself.

This development, of course, does not negate the value of Cosmic Breathing even just for combat efficiency. The contribution of Cosmic Breathing to combat efficiency not only makes our kungfu training meaningful, it gives us courage and confidence in daily living. But it is in the other two hallmarks of any great kungfu, namely internal force and spiritual cultivation, that the contribution of Cosmic Breathing has its greatest value irrespective of whether one is at a student's, a master's or a supreme stage.

For me the attainment of internal force has enabled me to have better health and vitality and better performance in daily activities than many people half my age, and the attainment of spiritual cultivation has enabled me to be peaceful and happy every day. Much of these attainments come from Cosmic Breathing.

Question 2

Is it beneficial to train yourself to use cosmic breathing informally as a breathing mode at any time or place?

What if the environment is negative, for example in a sewer at midday? Would you take in more negative energy or would it protect you?

Jas

Answer

Yes, generally it is beneficial to train oneself to use cosmic breathing informally as a breathing mode in daily life. However, if the environment or timing is negative, he may take in negative energy unless he protects himself against it.

Please note that here “cosmic breathing”, with small letters “c” and “b”, refers to the ability to have energy passing in and out of a practitioner without the need of breathing in air through the nose and breathing out air through the mouth or nose. “Cosmic Breathing”, with capital letters “C” and “B”, refers to the special method, which includes techniques and skills like the one we practice in our school, to acquire this ability.

Advanced yogis have this ability of cosmic breathing, though their training method may be different from ours. They could be buried underground for a few days, yet they were still alive and kicking when they were unearthed. They did not need to breath with their nose and mouth. They could live though buried underground because their energy, which is necessary for life, continued to be exchanged between them and the Cosmos.

Kungfu students who attended my intensive kungfu courses also have this ability,

though some of them had not attended my Cosmic Breathing course. Because of this ability they could spar for many hours without panting for breath. Panting for breath became irrelevant to them because they did not have to breathe in and out through their nose and mouth. Energy just exchanged between them and the Cosmos while they were engaged in sparring.

Many of them may not realize they were not breathing in the modern sense of the term where air is breathed in through the nose and out through the mouth, but they were breathing in the classic sense of energy exchange. In Chinese, which is “hu xi” in Mandarin or “fu kap” in Cantonese, the classic meaning of breathing was an exchange of energy, and not an exchange of air. Various breathing methods were practiced in Chinese chi kung long before air was discovered in the West.

Many chi kung masters today may not realize this fact. Hence some of them talk, erroneously, of abdominal breathing and reverse breathing as diaphragm breathing and chest breathing. Abdominal breathing and reverse breathing involve energy, whereas diaphragm breathing and chest breathing involve air.

How did some kungfu practitioners at my intensive kungfu courses develop cosmic breathing if they had not attended Cosmic Breathing courses with me? They developed the ability without their conscious knowing from various exercises during the intensive courses.

Our method of Cosmic Breathing was also developed by me spontaneously, at first without my conscious knowing. Through years of practicing the method of Abdominal Breathing, my ability of abdominal breathing gradually became cosmic breathing. Because of my philosophical understanding and teaching experience, I can now teach students to attain the ability of cosmic breathing in a Cosmic Breathing course in just a few hours although I myself took many years to attain the ability.

There are, of course, many other wonderful benefits of the ability of cosmic breathing from a Cosmic Breathing course, besides being able to spar for a few hours without panting for breath. In a nutshell, cosmic breathing enable us to attain peak performance in both our physical and mental activities. In spiritual cultivation, cosmic breathing enables us to merge with the Cosmos, or to have a glimpse of it as we return to our phenomenal world.

However, if the environment is negative, like at a sewer or in midday, the negative energy may flow into the body of a cosmic breathing practitioner if he has not protected himself against this adverse effect. The protection is quite easy if one knows how to do it. Our chi kung healers give themselves and others around them this protection when they treat patients suffering from serious diseases, like cancer. I can transmit this protection skill during the Cosmic Breathing course. Those attending the course, please remind me in case I forget.

In theory a cosmic breathing exponent who also knows the Small Universe can protect himself and activate his Small Universe so that his energy will recycle inside his own body without being affected by the negative energy outside. But in practice this is not necessary. All he needs to do is to move to another place where the outside energy is good.

Similarly, in theory a great chi kung master can create water from the air. In practice this is a very unwise use of his mind power. All he needs to do is to turn on a tap.

Question 3

Please could you discuss the similarities and differences between Cosmic Breathing and the Transcendental Big Universe?

Mathew

Answer

Cosmic Breathing and Transcendental Big Universe are different arts. Both of them are very advanced.

In Cosmic Breathing, practitioners breathe in and out cosmic energy, without having to breathe in and out air through the nose and mouth. They literally pulsate with the Cosmos.

In Transcendental Big Universe, the personal energy of practitioners merges with the universal energy of the Cosmos. As we return to our phenomenal world, we call this supreme experience a satori, or a spiritual awakening, where we have a glimpse of Cosmic Reality.

We often use Cosmic Breathing as a means to attain Transcendental Big Universe. Herein lies its similarity, though they are different.

Yet, when we pulsate with the Cosmos in Cosmic Breathing, and forget about ourselves or discover that we have no form, our Cosmic Breathing has become Transcendental Big Universe.

When we pulsate with the Cosmos but are aware of our body or form, we are performing Cosmic Breathing and not yet in Transcendental Big Universe. If we are aware that our energy is flowing through all out 12 primary meridians, we are

in Phenomenal Big Universe, as we are still in the phenomenal world and in Chinese medical terms when energy is flowing smoothly through all the 12 primary meridians, it is called the Big Universe.

In Transcendental Big Universe, there is no form, no differentiation. All is one, or nothing. Depending on whether there is differentiation or any form, Cosmic Breathing can be phenomenal or transcendental. Herein lies their similarities and differences.

Very roughly we may call Cosmic Breathing the technique, and Transcendental Big Universe the skill. This description is not accurate because both Cosmic Breathing and Transcendental Big Universe are also skills as well as attainments.

Instead of being a means, which may be described as a technique or a skill, Cosmic Breathing can also be an end by itself, which may be described as an attainment. We may use the technique and skill of Abdominal Breathing, or of Reverse Breathing to attain the result or benefit of Cosmic Breathing.

On the other hand, Transcendental Big Universe is not a technique. It is an end, or a result, or an attainment. In theory practitioners can use any technique to attain Transcendental Big Universe, but in practice most of them use sitting meditation. But they do not have good result. Many of them do not know why they practice sitting meditation, nor do they realize that sitting in a lotus position is just a technique.

We are elite, we use Cosmic Breathing to realize Transcendental Big Universe, and achieve very good result.

Question 4

Is Cosmic Breathing used primarily to fulfill spiritual aspirations and expand into the Cosmos?

When one expands into the Cosmos and returns back to the Dan Tian, does the practitioner gain even more energy from spending time in the Cosmos?

Personally, I feel that after I merge with the energy of the Cosmos, I pull extra cosmic energy back to my Dan Tian on the return.

What are the benefits of Cosmic Breathing for everyday life in the mundane world?

Stephen

Answer

Yes, Cosmic Breathing is primarily used to fulfill spiritual aspirations and expand into the Cosmos. The Cosmic Breathing we practice was inspired from a very advanced internal art exercise I read from some Taoist classics called Opening of the Golden Flower.

In this very advanced art, a Taoist aspirant sat in a lotus position, go into meditation, and exchanged energy with the Cosmos. The cosmic energy was built into a ball and stored at the abdominal dan tian, the qi-hai energy point. Some classics started with the lowest dan tian, the hui-ying energy point.

At the abdominal dan tian, the aspirant infused his spirit into the ball of energy. He called it his divine foetus. Gradually he brought his divine foetus up to his middle dan tian at the huang-ding energy point, and eventually at the top dan tian at the bai-hui energy point at the crown of his head. By then which would take

many years, he had infused his spirit into the ball of energy. His bai-hui opened and his divine person with his spirit emerges and roams the heavens as an immortal, discarding his physical body behind.

Needless to say, the brief description of this Opening of Golden Flower is for theoretical knowledge. One should not attempt it without the supervision of a competent master.

Our Cosmic Breathing is of a lower level than Opening of the Golden Flower. We do not intend to use Cosmic Breathing to become an immortal. Yet, Cosmic Breathing has the potential to attain an even higher level than Opening of the Golden Flower. An immortal is still in the phenomenal realm. Totally merging with the Cosmos, which Cosmic Breathing may lead us to attain when we are ready, is transcendental.

When we expand into the Cosmos and return to the phenomenal world by focusing at his dan tian, we gain more energy from spending time in the Cosmos. I don't know how or why we gain energy, but I know from experience that we do.

Although I may not know for sure why or how we gain energy, I can make a guess – not a wild guess, but a guess based on understanding and experience. In fact, this was how the philosophy or chi kung, kungfu or any art was developed. A lot of experience happened, then masters looked back at their experience and explained what happened. Their explanation constituted the philosophy of the art.

For example, past masters discovered that when they were tensed they could not tap energy from the Cosmos. After a lot of such experiences, they concluded that one had to be relaxed to tap energy from the Cosmos. They also discovered that even when they were relaxed but if their mind wandered about, they also could not tap energy from the Cosmos. After a lot of such experiences, they explained that in order to tap energy from the Cosmos, a practitioner needed to be focused

and relaxed. Now we call this requirement entering into a chi kung state of mind.

When we returned to our phenomenal world after expanding into the Cosmos, we felt we had more energy. This happened to us not once or twice but all the time. This also happened to those who successfully expanded into the Cosmos and returned to the phenomenal world. Therefore, we can conclude that when we return to our phenomenal world after expanding into the Cosmos, we have more energy.

Why does this happen? Our explanation is our theory. Our theory may be right or wrong, but our experience is a fact. This is a very important observation that can greatly enrich our daily life, though many people outside our school many not realize it, and therefore miss our benefit. A main reason why they miss the benefit is because they lack the experience and do not believe in the experience.

For example, from our experience we know that by practicing chi kung we have good health and vitality. We may explain this fact with the theory that practicing chi kung generates a chi flow, and chi flow contributes to good health and vitality.

Now, for fun, suppose this theory were wrong. Suppose that it was not chi flow that contributed to good health and vitality, it was something else. But still the fact remains that by practicing chi kung we have good health and vitality.

From their experience, chi kung healers discover that people who were sick, including those suffering from so-called incurable diseases, recover their good health by practicing chi kung. They explain this experience with the theory that people were sick because of energy blockage, and when chi flow from their chi kung practice cleared the blockage, they recovered from their sickness.

Again, just for fun, suppose the theory was incorrect. Sickness was not due to energy blockage, or chi flow did not clear energy blockage. But the fact still

remains that by practicing chi kung people who were sick recovered from their sickness.

Of course we do not formulate our theory from whims and fancies. We formulate our theory from our understanding and experience. We understand that energy is all around us, and that at the transcendental level there is no differentiation. But there is differentiation into countless entities in our phenomenal world due to our gross sense organs

In other words, in the phenomenal world because of our gross sense organs we do not see an undifferentiated spread of energy, we see countless entities like a table, a computer and other things and people, though we understand that these countless entities are ultimately energy.

When we practice Cosmic Breathing and expand into the Cosmos, we break down the conditions of the phenomenal realm into transcendental Cosmic Reality. We experience not differentiated entities as in the phenomenal world but undifferentiated spread of energy in transcendental Cosmic Reality. We become an integral part of the Cosmos, which is much bigger and stronger than our physical body.

When we return to our physical body by focusing on our dan tian, we carry back some cosmic energy with us, thus making us stronger than before. In a rough description which is not quite accurate, when we expand into the Cosmos, our spiritual presence includes energy outside our imaginary physical body. When we return to our physical body, this energy that was outside is now inside.

As a rough analogy, when you return to your house after seeing a humorous movie, you feel happier than before. The happy feeling which was not in your house before, is brought home from the movie cinema into your house.

Cosmic Breathing brings tremendous benefits into our everyday life in the mundane world. A spiritual awakening when one expands into the Cosmos is life-changing. His life will never be the same as before. It brings joy and meaning to his mundane world.

He may realize that his spirit will never die, thus overcoming the greatest fear of most people, the fear of death. This will give him tremendous confidence in life.

Things that seem important before – like passing his exam, not missing his train, saying happy birthday to his girlfriend, accepted by his peers – suddenly become petty. It does not mean that he will neglect these petty things. In fact, his spiritual awakening will enable him to derive more joy from simple, little things, but if he fails to get them, he knows the world is not going to end.

He will have a lot of energy. As he is not limited by physical breathing, he will not be panting for breath when engaged in physical activities.

He will also have a lot of mental clarity. He can solve problems more effectively and conceptualize more clearly.

With increased energy and better mental clarity, he will have better result in whatever he does.

Question 5

Is Cosmic Breathing primarily a health recovery practice, a vitality practice or a spiritual practice? What advice do you have for integrating Cosmic Breathing into their training schedule for (1) fresh beginner, (2) intermediate and (3) advanced student.

Sifu Andy Cusick

Answer

Cosmic Breathing is a very advanced exercise. In an orthodox way, Cosmic Breathing, which is the most advanced of Taoist Chi Kung, is for spiritual cultivation to attain the Tao, and is not suitable for health recovery and vitality.

However, we are special. Because of our ability in energy flow, which may not be available to other practitioners, we can use Cosmic Breathing for vitality practice. In theory, we may also use Cosmic Breathing for health recovery, but it is not recommended as it is too powerful for this purpose. Our students can employ less powerful exercises, which are actually more effective, to recover from illness and regain good health.

This fact is of much importance to chi kung practitioners in general and to our students in particular. Due to shallow understanding, many people want to learn advanced exercises from books, and in shorter time than students learning from living masters. They end up wasting their time or harming themselves.

It is beneficial for our students to know that a more powerful exercise is not necessary more useful. As most people today practice chi kung to overcome illness, medical chi kung, which is the least powerful exercise, is the most useful. If sick people practice powerful chi kung exercises, they may harm themselves.

At the risk of appearing to be arrogant, the answer to integrating Cosmic Breathing into their practice for beginners, intermediate students and advanced practitioners depends on whether the answer is for most practitioners who practice chi kung as gentle physical exercise but they honestly think it is chi kung, or to very few practitioners who practice genuine chi kung, like our students.

For most practitioners it does not matter whether they regard themselves, or others regard them, as beginners, intermediate students or advanced practitioners, because all they practice is gentle physical exercise which does not bring any Cosmic Breathing benefits or any chi kung benefits.

It is not advisable for them to practice Cosmic Breathing irrespective of whether they are beginners, intermediate students or advanced practitioners. They would be lucky if they just waste their time. It would be worse if the practice cause harmful effects to them.

For those who practice genuine chi kung, like our students, it is not advisable for beginners to practice Cosmic Breathing because it is too powerful. It may bring harmful effects if they practice wrongly, or over-training if they practice correctly. Either way it does not bring them benefits. However, for our beginning students, their chi flow can erase the harmful effects due to wrong practice or mild over-training.

It is recommendable for those who practice genuine chi kung at the intermediate level to practice Cosmic Breathing for vitality and peak performance. For those at the advanced level, they can practice Cosmic Breathing for spiritual cultivation.

Because we are frighteningly cost-effect, our intermediate and advanced practitioners must guard against over-training. Cosmic Breathing is a very powerful exercise, and over-training, even when it is practiced correctly, may bring powerful side-effects. An excellent way to guard against over-training is not to

enter too deeply into a chi kung state of mind.

As I have often mentioned, students over-train at my regional as well as intensive courses. This happens because I want to teach many things, many of which are advanced, in just a few days. It is alright when over-training occurs once a while, but not on a regular basis. Hence, when students practice at home, they should not aim to get the best from their practice; they should aim at getting just 30% of what they obtain at the courses. To other people, it sounds like a big joke.

Question 6

In Sifu's Q and A series about the 18 Jewels, Sifu wrote the following:

“Four Gates is like the kungfu counter-part of 18 Jewels, and Triple Stretch the kungfu counter part of Sineu Metamorphosis” —

<http://www.shaolin.org/chikung/18-je...-jewels04.html> .

I don't know if this is a general description of these arts or if Sifu was using these comparisons to make the answers regarding different types of chi flow more clear. In either case, if the comparison was general or meant specifically to highlight the answer about chi flow, or both, what would be the kung fu counterpart of Cosmic Breathing? Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

The comparison is a general description of the powerful nature of the arts, and not a specific description of their chi flow.

Many people have a misconception that the more vigorous a chi flow movement is, the more advanced is the art. This is not so, although at the beginners' stage a more competent practitioner has a more vigorous chi flow movement than a less competent practitioner. But as the two practitioners have progressed to an advanced stage, their external chi flow movement is little, though their internal chi flow, which may not be expressed as external chi flow movement, may be powerful.

In other words, when students start to learn chi kung, they hardly have any external chi flow movement. This is mainly because they are not relaxed and their mind is not clear of all thoughts.

Please note that this situation applies to students in general. Our students are different; as they can enter into a chi kung state of mind readily, they can have a chi flow manifested as outward movement on the very first day of their chi kung training. For most students in general, their first chi flow movement manifested externally may happen only after many months if they are competent. Others who are not competent will not experience any chi flow movement.

We refer to this stage when chi flow movement occurs as the beginners' stage. For a few students it may happen after a few months; for some it may happen after a few years; and for many it may never happen at all regardless of how long they may have practiced. For these many practitioners who never experience any chi flow, irrespective of whether the chi flow occurs internally or is manifested as external movements, they practice chi kung techniques as gentle physical exercise, and they are unaware of the fact.

If they have been practicing for many years and also are teaching others, they may be regarded as "masters", though in our context they are not even at the beginners' stage because they have not even started practicing chi kung. They have all the while been practicing gentle physical exercise. But we refer to them as "masters" out of respect.

In our context, we classify whether a practitioner is at a beginners' stage, an intermediate stage, or an advanced stage by his results. If he just starts learning chi kung, or is still in the process of overcoming his pain and illness, we refer to him as at a beginners' stage. If he has overcome his pain and illness and is able to use the benefits of chi kung to enrich his life, we refer to him as at an intermediate stage. If his chi kung training has enabled him to attain peak performance or he is at a high level of spiritual development, we refer to him as at an advanced stage.

Hence, in our context, time is not a deciding factor. A practitioner may be at an

advanced stage after just two years if chi kung training has enabled him to attain peak performance in his daily life or attain a high level of spiritual cultivation.

Most other people classify whether a practitioner is at a beginners' stage, an intermediate stage, or an advanced stage by the time he has practiced chi kung techniques, often as gentle physical exercise. If the practitioner has practiced for less than a year, he is at a beginner's stage. If he has practiced for a few years, he is at an intermediate stage. If he has practiced for more than 10 years, he is at an advanced stage.

But some fools, trying to impress others as wise, call themselves beginners even when they have practiced for more than 20 years. Isn't it foolish to remain as a beginner after having practiced an art for more than 20 years? Either they have mastered the art, even at a low level, or at least have become competent practitioners, or they have totally wasted their time practicing chi kung as gentle physical exercise, or kungfu as flowery fists and embroidery kicks.

The comparison between saying Four Gates is the kungfu counter-part of 18 Jewels and Triple Stretch the kungfu counter-part of Sinew Metamorphosis is to show the relative power of Four Gates and 19 Jewels on one hand and Triple Stretch and Sinew Metamorphosis on the other.

Four Gates was the fundamental kungfu set at the southern Shaolin Temple, a set that every kungfu student learned to acquire himself the knowledge and skills in basic combat. Practicing Four Gates was an excellent way for a beginning student to apply basic stances and patterns for fighting. However, when he had progressed to a more advanced level and wanted to develop more powerful internal force and learn more sophisticated techniques, he had to learn more advanced sets like Triple Stretch. The techniques and force training in Four Gates did not fulfil his more advanced needs.

When a person is sick and wants to get well, or if he is healthy and wants to acquire basic chi kung techniques and skills, 18 Jewels is an excellent chi kung set to meet his needs. The exercises in 18 Jewels are simple but sufficient to enable him to enter into a chi kung state of mind and generate an energy flow. These simple chi kung techniques and skills are excellent to fulfil a beginner's needs in recovering from an illness or benefiting from chi kung benefits of attaining good health. But when he has progressed to a more advanced stage for peak performance or spiritual cultivation, he needs more sophisticated techniques and more powerful force training methods in arts like Sinew Metamorphosis.

The kungfu counter-part of Cosmic Breathing is the Flower Set. Cosmic Breathing and Sinew Metamorphosis are in the same high-level category of chi kung, just as Flower Set and Triple Stretch are in the same high-level category of kungfu. However, Sinew Metamorphosis and Triple Stretch are hard and consolidated, whereas Cosmic Breathing and Flower Set are soft and flowing. All of them are very powerful exercises, and it is a rare privilege to train them, enabling us to excel in perfect yin-yang harmony.

It is worthy to note, if we wish to be more precise, that Cosmic Breathing refers to skills whereas Sinew Metamorphosis refers to techniques. We can use different techniques, like Abdominal Breathing, Reversed Breathing or even performing a kungfu set to activate Cosmic Breathing. On the other hand, we can apply the same Sinew Metamorphosis techniques to activate different skills, like generating an energy flow, developing internal force, or expanding into the Cosmos.

But at the supreme stage, figuratively described as "tang fong choe kaki" in Cantonese or "deng feng zao ji" in Mandarin, which may be translated as "attaining the summit of development and extending the limits of progress" in English, skills and techniques and other terms are convenient descriptions enabling us to obtain better benefits in shorter time, and not as definitives to limit our progress. Though it may sound boastful to our critics, I am happy and proud that many of our

advanced practitioners are at this stage. Engaging in sparring for hours and still not out of breath, which is a benefit of Cosmic Breathing, is an indicator.

Question 7

From all the wonderful arts we practice Cosmic Breathing is the most outstanding to me.

Whenever someone doubts the art of Bigu (not taking in food at all), I tell him that I did not breathe for about 10 minutes at an Intensive Chi Kung course with Sifu. So, when even breathing (as conceptualized by modern terms) is not necessary, why should the far less important need of eating be?

Now, I'm coming to my questions:

Sifu, is it possible to "cosmic breathe" underwater? If so, how does being underwater affect Cosmic Breathing?

Is it theoretically possible and advisable to keep "Cosmic Breathing" all day long, while staying in the phenomenal world?

Can Sifu please tell us any interesting stories about past masters' achievements in this incredible art?

Sifu Leonard Lackinger

Answer

You probably did not breathe, as conceptualised by modern terms, for more than 10 minutes and for many occasions. In the many sparring sessions for hours during my kungfu courses, you used Cosmic Breathing unconsciously whereby you did not breath in an out through your nose and mouth as people normally do.

Cosmic Breathing is also one of my chi kung specialties. I developed Cosmic Breathing on my own from Abdominal Breathing. I did not learn Cosmic Breathing from my sifu.

My sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, taught me Abdominal Breathing as part of Small

Universe. The traditional method of Small Universe was Abdominal Breathing. When a practitioner's dan tian was filled with energy, the energy overflowed along the ren and the di meridians completing the small universal chi flow. It took past masters more than 10 years to complete the Small Universe, and they often held a dinner to celebrate it.

My sifu taught me reverse breathing to speed up my Small Universe by bringing my energy up from my hui-yin to my bai-hui . I took about 2 years to complete the Small Universe.

Later I devised more methods to speed up the process of the Small Universe in 5 stages, which are Abdominal Breathing, Submerged Breathing, Long Breathing, Forceful Small Universe, and Gentle Small Universe. It is incredible but true that now Shaolin Wahnam students take only 3 days to learn the methods of the 5 stages to activate the Small Universe. But only students who already have the necessary chi at their dan tian to complete the small universal chi flow will be accepted at the Small Universe course.

The orthodox method of the Small Universe is Abdominal Breathing. I call this orthodox Small Universe the gentle Small Universe, to differentiate it from the forceful Small Universe which uses reverse breathing to speed up the process of the small universal chi flow. Having completed the small universal chi flow in relatively shorter time, I revert back to Abdominal Breathing which generates the small universal chi flow in a gentle way.

The forceful Small Universe is not just for speeding up the small universal chi flow. It is also useful for other purposes, like for exploding force in combat for a long period.

Most practitioners do not differentiate between skills and techniques. To achieve the Small Universe, for example, they use Abdominal Breathing, which refers to

both the skill and the technique. In other words, practitioners breathe in energy to their dan tian. Their abdomen rises gently as they breathe in, and falls as they breathe out.

After a few years they have a lot of energy at their dan tian, which gives them internal force. As they continue to practice, the energy overflows into the ren and the du meridians and eventually constitute a never-ending circle of energy flow, which gives them good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity as well as tremendous internal force.

We differentiate between techniques and skills, which makes us very cost effective — to an extent that we have to be careful not to over-train. The manner of breathing in energy into the dan tian with the abdomen rising on breathing in and falling on breathing out, we refer to as the technique. The accomplishment of having a lot of energy stored at our dan tian, we refer to as the skill. We call this particular technique dan tian breathing, and this particular skill Abdominal Breathing. When energy has overflowed round the ren and the du meridians in a never-ending circle, we call the skill Small Universe. We may attain the skill of Small Universe using the technique of dan tian breathing, or using the technique of reverse breathing.

We can also attain the skill of Abdominal Breathing using the technique of reverse breathing, but it is not as efficacious as using the technique of dan tian breathing.

I may have mixed up dan tian breathing and Abdominal Breathing as the skill and the technique in my earlier writing. In other words, in my earlier writing I might have referred to Dan Tian Breathing as the skill, and abdominal breathing as the technique. Or I might have referred to abdominal breathing (with small letters) as the technique, and Abdominal Breathing (with capital letters) as the skill. As these terms are meant for convenience and better understanding, I shall let time and usage to decide whether dan tian breathing and Abdominal Breathing refer to skill

or to technique. But in this answer, dan tian breathing refers to the technique, and Abdominal Breathing refers to the skill.

I continued to practice Abdominal Breathing and sometimes Small Universe using the technique of dan tian breathing. After a few years I noticed that instead of energy coming in through my nose down to my dan tian in Abdominal Breathing, or continue the small universal chi flow in Small Universe, cosmic energy spontaneously flowed into my dan tian as I breathed in and flowed out into the Cosmos as I breathed out. Initially I called this skill Dan Tain Breathing. Now I call it Cosmic Breathing, as I literally pulsate with the Cosmos.

Bigu, i.e. not eating food, is true. I tried bigu for about 20 days more than 30 years ago (in 1980s). For the first two days, I took some chocolate, then I did not eat any food at all except on the third or fourth day when my wife, not knowing I was experiencing with bigu, specially cooked me a delicious dish I like, curry prawns. It was not a wise thing to tell my lovely wife who cooked a delicious dish specially for me that I was not going to eat it. After that I did not eat any food.

The bigu experience did not affect my daily life. I continued to teach kungfu and spar with my students, and was energetic the whole day. In fact I found bigu give me more energy and more mental clarity.

I ended bigu because of a graduation dinner of a chi kung class in Sepang, a small town about 500 kilometres from my home, and where the Kuala Lumpur International Airport is now situated. I found it inappropriate to tell the organiser, Ai Foong, that I would not attend the dinner due to bigu. Incidentally neither she nor the chi kung students and all other people knew I had not eaten for 20 days.

At first I thought of teaching bigu to people who did not have enough money to buy food. But I was wise enough to give up this foolish idea. If you realise that even sick people suffering from so-called incurable diseases do not want to learn

chi kung from us to recover, despite the abundant evidence of our successful cases, you may realise how foolish it is to teach people bigu so that they need not eat. It would be better for economists to teach them how to manage their resources, or to tempt them with delicious food so that they may earn money to buy it. But I am sure many of our instructors and students, including those who love to eat, can attempt bigu successfully for fun.

Theoretically it is possible to use Cosmic Breathing under water, but in practice I have not tried it. I am sure there is energy under water, otherwise fish would be unable to live. In Cosmic Breathing, a practitioner exchanges energy that is inside his body with energy that is outside, without having to go through the normal breathing process with the nose and month.

I reckon deep sea divers use Cosmic Breathing, though they may not have heard of the term. They probably developed Cosmic Breathing through years of doing experience.

When a practitioner is above water, if he accidentally breathe with his nose or mouth, it is fine. He can't do that underwater. But I presume it does not matter much. As soon as he realises his mistake, he reverts to Cosmic Breathing.

In theory it is possible to keep Cosmic Breathing all day long in the phenomenal world, but it may not be advisable. In principle it is the same as the possibility of a high-level master creating water from thin air, but it is easier to get water by turning on a tap.

Nevertheless, we have not actually explored the potential benefits of Cosmic Breathing, other than specific needs like sparring for hours or expanding into the Cosmos. If the benefits are enormous and it is easier than normal breathing through the nose and mouth, some masters may choose to use Cosmic Breathing all day long while still in the phenomenal world.

Jean, the Chief Instructor of Canada, once told me a theory that an individual is given a number of breaths, and when he has used up this number of breaths, he dies. If this theory is true, Cosmic Breathing may enable practitioners to live forever, or at least prolong their life.

In my younger days I was intrigued by stories of Yogis being buried underground for a few days, then emerged alive and kicking. Later I realised that they used Cosmic Breathing.

Some kungfu and chi kung masters lived long lives. Zhang San Feng, for example, live over 200 years in the phenomenal world. It was not mentioned in records, but I guess they used Cosmic Breathing. But it was recorded that most of them practiced the Small Universe. It was likely that their dan tian breathing, the technique they used for their Small Universe, developed into Cosmic Breathing.

By the way, the term Cosmic Breathing was my invention. It was not used in the past, though pulsating with the Cosmos was sometimes mentioned in some classics.

Question 8

The techniques of either Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis, Taoist Small Universe or Medical Big Universe can be used to operate the skill of Cosmic Breathing. If all things were equal, which technique is a better choice or is it perhaps a combination of techniques?

In the same vein, which technique is better to facilitate a progression from Cosmic Breathing to Merging with the Cosmos?

Dr Damian Kiskey

Answer

Yes, any one of the techniques in Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis, Small Universe or Medical Big Universe can be used in attaining the skill of Cosmic Breathing.

In other words, for the sake of other readers who may not understand the above statement clearly, when a practitioner practices any exercise form Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis, besides developing tremendous internal force and mental clarity, he may also pulsate with the Cosmos. Similarly, when he practices Small Universe or Medical Big Universe, besides energy flowing continuously along his ren and du meridians, or flowing along all his 12 primary meridians, he may have an exchange of energy between his dan tian and the Cosmos without having to breath through his nose and mouth as ordinary people do.

If all other things were equal, the techniques of Small Universe will be the best choice in attaining the skill of Cosmic Breathing. It is a better choice than combining the techniques of Small Universe with the techniques of any one or both Sinew Metamorphosis and Medical Big Universe, or with other arts not mentioned here. Indeed, that was how I myself attained the skill of Cosmic

Breathing. I believe other masters would have similar progression, though they may not call the new development Cosmic Breathing, and also as they focus on the small universal energy flow, many of them may not be consciously aware of an exchange of energy between their dan tian and the Cosmos without the need for normal breathing.

The term “Cosmic Breathing” was coined by me. I did not find a similar term in Chinese in chi kung classics. The closest term would be “womb breathing”, which is sometimes translated as “foetus breathing”, but these terms have different connotation as Cosmic Breathing.

When I first realised the experience of Cosmic Breathing, I used the term “Dan Tian Breathing”. For a time, I used the terms “Dan Tian Breathing” and “Abdominal Breathing” interchangeably. Now I generally use “Abdominal Breathing” and “Cosmic Breathing” to refer respectively to the skills of energy flowing to and from the nose and mouth to our dan tian, and refer to the skills of an exchange of energy between our dan tian and the Cosmos without the need for normal breathing. We can attain either skill using the technique of dan tian breathing.

We can also attain the skills of Abdominal Breathing or Cosmic Breathing using other techniques, like Lifting the Sky, Flicking Fingers, or reverse breathing. But, if all other things were equal, using the technique of dan tian breathing is most effective.

This explains why using the techniques of Small Universe is the most effective for attaining the skills of Cosmic Breathing. It is because the techniques used in both cases are the same.

Of course, fundamental techniques and skills of performing the techniques well, like standing upright, being relaxed and not thinking of anything, are very important. Without these fundamental techniques and skills we cannot attain

Small Universe or Cosmic Breathing. We cannot even generate an energy flow, which is fundamental, which means necessary to attain any other skills.

The core technique is also the same. It is dan tian breathing. In other words, irrespective of whether we perform Small Universe, or Cosmic Breathing, we use dan tian breathing, or we let our dan tian rise and fall.

But the core skill is different. In Small Universe, we let energy flow round continuously along our ren and du meridians. In Cosmic Breathing we let energy exchange between our dan tian and the Cosmos.

It is helpful to realise that differentiating between skills and techniques is our innovation, which gives us a lot of benefits and makes us very cost-effective. Most other practitioners, including masters, in the past or at present, do not make this differentiation. It is also helpful to realise that the terms “skills” and “techniques” are for our convenience and better understanding.

Sometimes there may be overlapping. Sometimes it may not be easy to tell whether what we do is a skill or a technique. For example, is standing upright a skill or a technique?

We normally refer to it as a technique, as opposed to sitting down or moving about. But how well we stand upright is a skill. Many other practitioner thinks that they stand upright when they lean backward.

Strictly speaking, and this may come as a surprise to many people, including instructors and students in our school, the technique that best facilitates a progression from Cosmic Breathing to Merging with the Cosmos, is standing upright and be perfectly relaxed.

This is the technique we use when our instructors and students merge with the

Cosmos and attain a life-changing spiritual awakening. We do not lie down, sit on a chair, or move about. We also do not tense our muscles or think of countless thoughts. But more important than the technique is the skill — the skill of merging with the Cosmos.

To accomplish the skill of merging with the Cosmos, a lot of internal force is needed to break through the illusory body. Hence of the three arts mentioned — Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis, Taoist Small Universe and Medical Big Universe — the art that is most effective to facilitate a progression from Cosmic Breathing to Merging with the Cosmos is Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis. This is because Sinew Metamorphosis produces the great internal force to break through the illusory body.

Here is a good example of overlapping between skills and techniques or of the difficulty of stating whether Shaolin Sinew Metamorphosis, Taoist Small Universe and Medical Big Universe should be referred to as skills or techniques.

In saying that Sinew Metamorphosis is the most effective in merging with the Cosmos, we refer to the techniques in performing Sinew Metamorphosis compared to the techniques of performing Small Universe or Medical Big Universe, with the presumption that we have reasonable skills to perform them well. If all other things were equal, including the skills of perform the arts well, the force generated from Sinew Metamorphosis will be greater than the force generated from Small Universe or Medical Big Universe. This greatest force generated from Sinew Metamorphosis will enable practitioners after they have pulsated with the Cosmos in Cosmic Breathing to be most effective in applying the skills of Merging with the Cosmos.

Question 9

When I started with Zhan Zhuang I diligently followed your advice, to relax and to be focused. After I reached a certain level my mind would not only be focused on my dan tian anymore but being everywhere.

Later in Finale Ligure you told me about the focus mode and the Cosmos mode. Can you please explain the process behind starting with the Focus mode and ending up unintentionally in the Cosmos mode?

Then I would love to learn how the Cosmos mode in Shaolin Kungfu would differ from the Expansion mode in Xingyiquan physically, energetically as well as at the mind level?

Sifu Roland Mastel

Answer

I was very impressed with your zhan zhuang training at the start of your kungfu career. I remember that you could hardly remain at any stance for a few minutes, but through sheer dedication and diligent practice everyday, at a time even when you were holiday in Vietnam or Lao, you could eventually remain at a stance for an hour! As a result you developed tremendous internal force and at the same time remained very agile. Your nick-name of being a gorilla was aptly earned.

What was even more important was that you started with bodily pain everyday when you were a trainer for top sportsmen. You thought, wrongly at that time, that being in pain was part of the training for world top sportsmen. But eventually you became pain free. I still remember your joy when you reported to me that for the first time you felt free from pain. That, indeed, was a remarkable achievement. It was to me more significant than winning an Olympic title. It was an inspiration for all sportsmen and top trainers. You demonstrated from direct experience that it was possible to be pain free and still remained at world's top

level.

Your progress from being focused at your dan tian to being everywhere is a natural development, but it is a rare development that happens only to high-level masters. Masters in the past would need at least 20 years of training to arrive at this level. Some critics would be angry and asked how long had you trained? I don't actually keep count of the years you have been training, but I would estimate that you would have arrived at this level with less than 10 years of training. These critics would not believe in your attainment, and that is their business. What is important is that you have benefited much from the attainment, which is similar to what was described that past masters had attained.

What benefits can one get when he has progressed from focusing on the dan tian to being everywhere. We can learn a great lesson from Yagyu Tajima, one of the greatest Japanese swordsmen. Yagyu Tajima said that when a swordsman's mind was focused on any one part, like on his sword, he could use his sword expertly, but he might not be able to use other parts expertly. But if his mind was everywhere, he could use all parts expertly.

Interestingly, Yagyu Tajima attributed his expert swordsmanship to his Zen training, and not to his sword techniques. His Zen training enabled him to be present everywhere.

The focus mode is to be focused at any one point. Normally, this one point is the dan tian. In specific situation, like when he wants to massage his stomach in a chi kung exercise, this one point is his stomach. When he is one-pointed, he becomes very effective.

The Cosmos mode is where the mind is everywhere, not limited to only one point. It is a development from being one-pointed. When a practitioner is being one-pointed, his mind is at one. When his mind is everywhere, his mind expands to

zero.

The development from a wandering mind with myriad thoughts to a one-pointed mind to a mind that is present everywhere is a progress of mind training. First we bring the mind to one, then we let the mind expand to zero. It involves the processes of taming the mind, strengthening the mind and nourishing the mind.

Like most senior practitioners, you may think that your development from the focus mode to the Cosmos mode was unintentional. But actually it was the result of the many courses you had taken. Those who did not take the many courses like you did, would not have this development.

Basic courses like Generating Energy Flow and Five-Animal Play tames the mind, more advanced courses like Flower Set, Sinew Metamorphosis and Dragon Strength strengthen and nourish the mind. In basic exercises like the Eighteen Lohan Hands and the Eighteen-Lohan Art you bring the mind to one. In more advanced exercises like Cosmic Breathing and Merging with the Cosmos, you let your mind expand to zero.

It is helpful to remember that terms like Cosmos mode in Shaolin Kungfu and Expansion mode in Xingyiquan are not scientific terms with rigid definition, but chi kung and kungfu terms meant for convenience and better understanding. Hence, unlike rigid scientific terms, the meaning of chi kung and kungfu terms may vary according to different situations.

Generally, in the situations we normally use these terms, Cosmos mode is where we let our mind pervade, and not abide to anything. Instead of being in a Cosmos mode, if a student is in a focus mode in performing a combat sequence, he lets his mind abide to that sequence. If his partner responds accordingly, the student will be able to perform the sequence expertly. If the partner makes a mistakes or purposely goes out of routine, the student will be unable to cope with the

different response.

But if the student has progressed to the Cosmos mode, and let his mind pervade in everything instead of being focused on his combat sequence, he will be able to handle the unexpected response from his partner. It is the same in actual combat or in daily life.

The Expansion mode in Xingyiquan is specially used when students practice the Santi Stance. They let their internal force expand out from their body, instead of internal force focusing at their dan tian.

An obvious difference between the Cosmos mode in Shaolin Kungfu and the Expansion mode in Xingyiquan is that the former deals with mind, whereas the latter deals with energy. Another difference is that the former is physically mobile, whereas the latter is physically static.

These three aspects of the physical, energy and mind are not just applicable to the examples above. They also generally apply other situations. In other words, in daily life, for example, the Cosmos mode applies to moving activities with the mind spread over all the activities, whereas the Expansion mode applies to static activities with energy expanding out from the centre.

If you are feeding your child in a public park and a ball comes flying into him, if you are in a Cosmos mode, you can easily deflect the ball without any interference on your feeding. If you are in a focus mode, feeding your child with a one-pointed mind, the flying ball may land on him.

You are in a restaurant making an order, but a waiter is not paying attention. While physically static in your seat, you may let your energy expand into your voice to ensure that the waiter takes the right order. This is the Expansion mode in daily life.

Question 10

Could you please tell us more about the abdominal dan tian. In our school it is obviously very important, compared to other dan tian like ming men, hui yin, bai hui etc.

Marc-Andrin

Answer

“Dan tian” is in Chinese and it literally means “field of elixir”. It is a field, not a point. In my early years, some classics mentioned that the abdominal dan tian was located about two inches below the navel. Other classics mentioned that it was located about three inches below the navel.

Initially I was puzzled. Was the abdominal dan tian located two inches or three inches below the navel? Later I discover that it was a field and not a point. As a field, to say that it was located two inches or three inches below the navel were both correct.

Later I discovered that the abdominal dan tian of a master could extend beyond two or three inches. It could also extend beyond his physical body.

It is helpful to know that “inches” here refer not to the Chinese inches or the British inches, but to the biological inches. There are three small bones in your index finger. The space between the first joint and the second joint of your index finger is your biological inch. So, starting from the tip of your index finger, if you bend it at the first and second joints, and measure it two and a half times down your navel, that is roughly the centre of your abdominal dan tian.

About two biological inches below your navel is an energy point called qi-hai,

which means “sea of energy”. About three biological inches below your navel is an energy point called quan-yuan, which means “original gate”, i.e. the gate where your mother’s energy originally enter into you when you were a foetus. This is one of many important reasons why we must always be grateful to our mother.

The abdominal dan tian is sometimes called the central dan tian. If you measure yourself from head to feet, your abdominal dan tian is in the middle.

The abdominal dan tian is also called the natural dan tian. If you stand upright and be totally relaxed, your vital energy will naturally be focused at your abdominal dan tian. The pulsation of the natural dan tian is quite obvious in babies, especially when they are lied flat on the ground,

Dan tian is a field of elixir. Elixir here mans where vital energy accumulates and coalesces into a pearl. For our purpose, we normally translate dan tian as an energy field.

Besides the abdominal dan tian, there are other energy fields in our body where our vital energy is focused, and these energy fields are often named after the vital points where the vital energy accumulates.

At the top of the head is the bai-hu dan tian, which means energy field where energy from hundreds of meridians accumulates. It is also called the top dan tian as it is located at the upmost top.

Lowe down at the front of the face about the middle of the two normal eyes is the tien-mu dan tian, which means the energy field of the heavenly eye. It is called heavenly eye because at an advanced level when this vital point is open, the person can see things across space and time that normal persons cannot see.

In front of your body in between the two breasts is the tian ting dan tian, which

means the energy field of heavenly pavilion. It is called heavenly pavilion because here is where the spiritual heart, often called the spirit or soul in Western terms, is located. In Western biology, it is the solar plexus.

Some classics refer to this energy field as the middle energy field, which may cause some confusion with the abdominal dan tian. As I have mentioned before, chi kung and kungfu terms are meant for convenient; they are not scientific definitions, which define the limits of their meanings.

At the bottom of the body (apart from the limbs) is the hub-yin dan tian, which means energy field where the the two wins (the sexual organs and the anus) meet. This is sometimes called the bottom dan tian, as it is located at the bottom of the body (apart from the limbs).

At the back of the body opposite the navel is the ming men dan tian, which means energy field of the gate of life. Apart from the qual yuan dan tian, this ming men dan tian is also where the mother's (ENERGY?????) enter the foetus and starts life. It is believe in Chinese biology that life starts at the kidneys, and the ming men dan tian is a crucial energy field for the kidneys.

Going up the du mai, or the governing meridian, opposite the tien-ting dan tian is the lib-tai dan tian, which means energy field of spiritual platform. As its name suggests, this energy field has an important impact of the person's spiritual health.

All these dan tians mentioned above are single dan tians along the ren mai and the du mai or the conceptual meridian and the governing meridian. On the palms and feet are two pairs of dan trans.

At the centre of each palm is the lao-gong dan tian, which means energy field of palace of labour, so-called because the hands are important for work. When a

high-level kungfu master strikes an opponent with his palm, energy shoots out from this dan tian to injure the opponent.

At the bottom of each of both feet, about one-tire the length from the toes, is the yong-quan dan tian, which means energy field of gushing stream. If you are full of vitality, stand upright and be totally relaxed, you may feel energy gushing out from these two dan trans.

At first I wondered whether this person would be drained of energy as energy was gushing out, yet classics which described this phenomenon describe it as a sure sign of good health and vitality. I later discovered that as energy gushed out from the yong-quan energy fields, fresh energy from the Cosmos flow it. Energy could gush out freely only when the person was full of energy, which meant he had good health and vitality.

The abdominal dan tian, located at the hub-yin and guan-yuan vital points, is the most important. If unqualified, when someone mentions “dan tian”, he refers to this abdominal dan tian. If he wants to refer to the hui-yin dan tian, for example, he would say hub-yin dan tian, top dan tian or the dan tian at the top of the head.

Like the central bank of a country, this is the central bank of a person’s energy. If the abdominal dan tian is lacking of energy, the other dan trans will also be lacking of energy, and the person will be weak or sick. If his abdominal dan tian is full of energy, his other dan tians will be full of energy too, and he will have good health, vitality and longevity.

No matter what types of chi kung exercises a practitioner may perform, at the end of the exercise he returns the energy to his abdominal dan tian. In some exercises, the extra energy may be stored at an appropriate dan tian, but eventually it will be returned to the abdominal dan tian.

For example, a practitioner practicing Iron Palm may consciously or unconsciously have his energy stored at the lao-gong dan tian. After some time the excess energy at the lao-gong dan tian will be transferred to the abdominal dan tian. This can be effected consciously, like the practitioner thinking of his abdominal dan tian at the end of his training session. Or it may occur unconsciously, with the practitioner doing nothing special, like the normal activities of the practitioners result in his energy returning to his abdominal dan tian.

If this does not occur, like the practitioner purposely keeps his energy at the other dan tian, or the passage way his other dan tian and his abdominal dan tian is blocked, his energy will not be in balance and it will affect his health, vitality and longevity.

Our students often have such experiences. After performing Pushing Mountain, for example, they may feel their hands and arms very powerful. But after some time, the power appears less. It is not that their energy has drained away but that the energy has flowed to their dan tian.

Some chi kung exercises specially focus energy at the abdominal dan tian. Abdominal Breathing is an excellent example. But the energy does not just stay at the abdominal dan tian. It also flows to other parts of his body, overcoming health problems he may not consciously know, and giving him good health, vitality and longevity. The energy must be flowing to give him benefits, otherwise if it just remain at the abdominal dan tian it may become stale and harmful. But it is focused at the abdominal dan tian — not static at the abdominal dan tian.

Question 11

Seemingly one does not necessarily need to eat neither drink (do you?) nor breathe. Why do most animals then do need to do those three things to survive. Isn't it easier to just breathe cosmically rather than care about getting sufficient food all day long etc?

When in the mothers womb you don't breathe either, but pulsate with the Cosmos. So why gets this connection cut and we start breathing? Is there any life form except humans which do or can do "cosmic breathing" in a wider sense?

Franz

Answer

All people need to eat, drink and breath. If you don't eat, you may last for two weeks, then you die. If you don't drink, you may last for two days. If you don't breath, you may last for 2 minutes.

Some very rare exceptions may not eat or drink, but they still need to breath. Many years ago I practiced "bigu", which literally means abstinence from eating grains, for about 20 days and found myself with more energy and more mental clarity than usual although I did not eat any food. As this happened many years ago, I can't remember now whether I drank any liquids, as my experiment was on not eating. Even if I drank, it wasn't much — certainly not like the amount of delicious orange juice I drank when in Spain.

But I still breathed. At that time I did not know Cosmic Breathing, at least not consciously. So I breathed with my nose and mouth.

Now knowing Cosmic Breathing, I can do away with breathing through nose and

mouth, but I breath with my dan tian. I haven't tried Cosmic Breathing for 20 days, so I cannot tell for sure whether I could do Cosmic Breathing for any reasonable length of time.

But there are masters, like yogis, who have done Cosmic Breathing for a reasonable length of time, though they may not call it Cosmic Breathing. They were buried under ground for a few days, and came out alive and kicking. While they were buried underground, they did not breath with their nose and mouth, but they breathed with their dan tian.

The word breathing in Chinese, which is "hu xi", means an exchange of energy. It does not mean an exchange of air, though many modern Chinese, including modern Chinese chi kung masters, may not realise it. This term, "hu xi", was used long before air was "discovered" by scientists, though air had been with us all the time.

Even when we breath with our nose and mouth, breathing is still an exchange of energy. We take in fresh energy from the air when we breath in, and give out used energy from our body when we breathe out. Air is a vehicle when we breath in and out through our nose and mouth.

When we perform Cosmic Breathing, we do away with air as a vehicle. If air gets into your stomach, you could be in big trouble. We take in fresh energy from the Cosmos directly when we breathe in, and give out used energy from our body when we breathe out.

Animals, like human, need to eat, drink and breath to survive. Even when animals hibernate, they still need to breathe. The chi kung we practice is meant for human. I leave chi kung for animals for others who may be interested. So I don't know whether some very rare animals practice Cosmic Breathing, irrespective of the name the animals may call this art or natural ability.

Your statement that it is easier to just breathe cosmically rather than care about getting sufficient food all day long, is also wrong. It is not easier to practice Cosmic Breathing. Students in our school are lucky. They have a chance to practice Cosmic Breathing and do away with finding food if they want to. Yet not all of them take the opportunity to learn it when this course is offered, which indicates, though it may not be conclusive, that they, often unconsciously, regard normal breathing via their nose and mouth easier than Cosmic Breathing.

Most other chi kung practitioners do not have a chance to practice Cosmic Breathing, which is an advanced chi kung art. They do not have a chance to practice even low-level chi kung; they only practice gently physical exercise. So, it is much harder, in the sense of availability, for them to practice Cosmic Breathing than to find food all day long, irrespective of the effort they put in.

People, even in countries where food is not easily available, do not have to find food all day long. Even when we take the term “all day long” figuratively, many people spend less time finding food than loitering about.

I don't know where you live, but if you live in Western Europe, the United States, New Zealand or Australia, you don't even have to spend any time finding food. If you are lazy to find food, your government will feed you. If you do not want to eat solid food, like if you fast in protest that Cosmic Breathing is not taught to people to replace finding food to eat, doctors will feed you liquid food in the form of glucose drips.

You also have forgotten another important point. Most people we know do not eat to survive. We eat because we like eating. Initially I did not find the food in some countries, like England, Switzerland and Germany, palatable, but now I find it delicious — much thanks to the organisers who take effort to scout for food to enjoy, not to survive.

When you were in your mother's womb, you breathed. You did not pulsate with the Cosmos — I don't think you knew Cosmic Breathing then. But your mother supplied you with fresh energy and take away your used energy through your quan-yuan and ming-men vital points. Your mother gave you life. This is one of many reasons why you must always be grateful and kind to your mother.

Why did you cut this connection of receiving energy from your mother, which was necessary for your life, and start breathing like what normal people do by breathing in and breathing out air through your nose and mouth? You may not know the answer, but I can tell you.

Your environment and needs have changed, so your normal activities too have changed according to the change of your environment and needs.

The environment in your mother's womb was different from your environment now. In your mother's worm, you were not directly in contact with air , which contained the energy you need for your life. Your mother supplied you fresh energy as well as took away your used energy.

Your needs when you were in your mother's worm were also different from your needs now. In your mother's womb, you were warm and comfortable, and you did not have to do anything, except moving about occasionally which gave your mother joy, and sometimes pain, which she lovingly endured. Now you have to find your own food, which includes breathing in air that contains energy, drinking liquids, and eating material which preferably you like.

Yes, there are also life forms besides humans which do and can do cosmic breathing. Unless you live in a desert, you can normally find a lot of examples if look around, except that you may not be aware of their ability. The great variety of plants, including all kinds of trees and grasses of all sizes and shapes, do this as their norm. They don't breathe like humans do.

There is a kind of plant or animal known in Chinese in Cantonese pronunciation as “toong choong ha choe”, which means “winter worm summer grass” that can also do cosmic breathing. I don’t know its English or scientific name, but I know that, as its name indicates, in winter it is a worm and in summer it is like a blade of grass. I don’t know whether as a worm in winter it does cosmic breathing or breathes like humans or as a worm does, but it certainly has to breathe so that it lives and can be like grass in summer, during which time it does cosmic breathing. You may be able to see it, or buy it to keep as a pet if you are willing to pay the prize as it is an expensive item, in some Chinese medical shops.

Question 12

I recall from your teachings that Cosmic Breathing is an important stepping stone to the Small and Big Universe.

If all things were equal, what are the stages of development one goes through while practicing Cosmic Breathing?

In these stages of development when are students ready for transition to the Small Universe?

David Langford

Answer

I can't remember when I mentioned that Cosmic Breathing was an important stepping stone to the Small and Big Universe, but it must be at an early stage of my development in Cosmic Breathing. Now at an advanced stage, Cosmic Breathing leads directly to transcendental Big Universe.

In my development, Cosmic Breathing developed spontaneously from Abdominal Breathing. It is well known in our school as I have mentioned the story many times, I "stole" Abdominal Breathing from my seniors in my Wuzuquan school taught by Sifu Chee Kim Thong, regarded as the living treasure of the People's Republic of China, in Dungun, a small town along the South China Sea in West Malaysia.

I was very fast in learning the techniques of Abdominal Breathing. I learned the techniques in less than 15 minutes. Yet, I did not have the result and benefit of Abdominal Breathing even after practicing for more than 2 years. At that time I did not know the difference between skills and techniques. I did not know that

although my techniques were correct, I did not have the necessary skills.

Then I learned Abdominal Breathing from my third sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, the third generation successor from the southern Shaolin Monastery at Quanzhou. I also did not realise the difference between skills and techniques at that time, but due to my sifu's excellent teaching, I could feel substantial internal force at my dan tian after a few months. In fact my dan tian developed into a small drum.

Abdominal Breathing, as the starting stage of Small Universe, was taught to me in secret, not openly in the school. I do not know whether other disciples of my sifu also learned Abdominal Breathing, but I don't think they did.

One very important technique my sifu taught me that enabled me to have the result and benefit of Abdominal Breathing in just a few months was to press my abdomen in when breathing out, and let my abdomen rise when breathing in. Later, in my early teaching of Abdominal Breathing in our school, I paid much importance to this technique.

Abdominal Breathing led to other stages which cumulated in Small Universe. I accomplished my real break-through of the Small Universe in about two and a half years, which was remarkable, and justified people calling me a kungfu genius.

I could accomplish the Small Universe in such a short time because my sifu taught me to use reverse breathing to bring my chi from hui-ying to bai-hui. I did not ask my sifu, nor did he tell me, whether this was his innovation, but I did not find it in any of the classics I had. Later, in my teaching of the Small Universe in Penang and Taiping, two beautiful cities in Malaysia, I called this stage the Long Breathing.

Hence, I could practice the Small Universe using two different modes of breathing, namely natural breathing where the abdomen sinks when breathing out and rises when breathing out, and reverse breathing where the abdomen rises when

breathing out and sinks when breathing in. There is another step after breathing out, which is swallow, where the abdomen continues to rise.

These two different modes of breathing in the Small Universe produce different natures of small universal energy flow. When natural breathing is used, the small universal flow is gentle, whereas when reverse breathing is used the universal flow is forceful. To differentiate these two types of the Small Universe, I call one the gentle Small Universe, and the other the forceful Small Universe.

I also did not find any mention of the forceful Small Universe in chi kung classics. I believe the forceful Small Universe was an innovation of my sifu to speed up the process of accomplishing the Small Universe. The usual time for masters in the past to accomplish the Small Universe was 10 years, and the orthodox method was to use natural breathing to practice Abdominal Breathing until energy at the dan tian overflowed and completed the small universal flow along the ren and du meridians.

I continued to employ natural breathing in my chi kung training, sometimes just for Abdominal Breathing and often for the Small Universe. In Abdominal Breathing I noticed that energy flowed down my nose to my dan tian, and out from my dan tian through my mouth. The flow was vertical. But gradually I noticed that energy flowed into my dan tian from the Cosmos, and out from my dan tian into the Cosmos. The flow was spherical. I do not know exactly how long this development took, but I estimate it to be about 2 years.

My own development spilled over into my teaching, but my students attained similar results in much shorter time. At first I did not call it Cosmic Breathing; I still called it Abdominal Breathing.

As my teaching methodology improved, I could simplify many teaching steps. Eventually students did not have to breathe through their nose and mouth; they

only needed to press and release their abdomen. I also noticed that energy flow directly from the Cosmos into their dan tian, and out from their dan tian into the Cosmos.

To differentiate these two arts, I called one Abdominal Breathing, where energy flowed in from the nose to the dan tian, and from the dan tian out of the mouth, and the other Dan Tian Breathing, where energy flowed from the Cosmos into the dan tian, and out from the dan tian into the Cosmos.

Later I changed the term from Dan Tian Breathing to Cosmic Breathing because participants literally pulsed with the Cosmos.

As my teaching continued to improve, I noticed that students could develop tremendous internal force in Cosmic Breathing. I grasped the opportunity and helped students to use this tremendous force to expand into the Cosmos. This was similar to transcendental Big Universe.

As it can be seen in this brief description of my own development in Cosmic Breathing as well as my teaching of Cosmic Breathing in our school, the developmental stages a practitioner goes through while practicing Cosmic Breathing depends on the reference point in question.

Regarding my own development in Cosmic Breathing, I had to start with Abdominal Breathing, progressed to a stage where I pressed and released my abdomen while breathing in and out through my nose and mouth, feeling energy flowing into and out of my dan tian, then after some time gradually feeling energy flowing into and out of my dan tian and the Cosmos, first with breathing in and out via the nose and mouth, and eventually without breathing in and out via the nose and mouth.

Our students now are very lucky. Instead of taking many steps, they take only one step. They go straight to Cosmic Breathing with energy flowing in and out between their dan tian and the Cosmos without breathing via their nose and mouth. It is incredible but true that they can accomplish this in 4 hours what it took me more than 2 years!

The answer as when are students ready for the transition to the Small Universe also depends on the point of reference. In my case I started with Abdominal Breathing, then I progress to Cosmic Breathing which I also called Abdominal Breathing at that time. When I had developed sufficient internal force, I used reverse breathing to complete my Small Universe, after which I continued with Cosmic Breathing, which to me was natural breathing with pressing and releasing my abdomen.

In my case, it was at the stage when my Cosmic Breathing, which was quite different from the Cosmic Breathing in skills and results of the Cosmic Breathing students now practice although the techniques were the same, had produced sufficient internal force, I was ready for transition to the Small Universe.

Now students do not need the Small Universe. (If they want the Small Universe, which gives many wonderful benefits, they have to take a special course on the Small Universe.) Cosmic Breathing, in just one step, can enable time to attain the Big Universe. I took about 5 years to attain the Big Universe. Students now can have similar results in 4 hours! Isn't that ridiculous?