

Pa Kua Chang Qi Gong

by Park Bok Nam and Dan Miller

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Baguazhang (Pa Kua Chang)*

If you have ever tried to catch a fish with your bare hands, then you know the frustration of a martial artist trying to combat a Baguazhang stylist. Baguazhang (Pa Kua Chang), like its sister arts Taijiquan (T'ai Chi Ch'uan) and Xingyiquan (Hsing-I Ch'uan), is commonly referred to as an "internal" or "soft" style. Like the Taijiquan practitioner, the Baguazhang stylist's movements are relaxed, supple, smooth and continuous. However, while the Taijiquan practitioner will usually practice at a slow steady pace, the Baguazhang practitioner will vary his rhythm and change directions quickly. His movements are continuous, but they are sometimes fast and sometimes slow, and his flexible body is always twisting, turning, coiling, and circling. Evasive footwork and snake-like body movements are characteristic of the style.

While the origins of Baguazhang are not clearly defined, research indicates that the style was probably developed on Kuang Hua mountain by the Taoist Bi Cheng-Xia (Pi Cheng-Hsia). Dong Hai-Quan (Tung Hai-Ch'uan), who is best known for popularizing and spreading the art in Beijing, is thought to have been a student of Bi Cheng-Xia--no one knows for sure. Bi took elements of the martial art styles that were indigenous to the Kuang Hua mountain region and integrated Taoist philosophical concepts to forge a highly effective health maintenance and martial arts system. The intent was to form a connection between the Taoist philosophy and the human body through the combination of body movement (martial technique), breathing, and meditation.

Every complete Chinese martial arts system will include elements of the following:

1) Qigong (Ch'i Kung)--breath control, visualization, and non-specific body movement techniques for various purposes--increased circulation to the distal points of the extremities, increased vital capacity, meditation, and Qi development.

2) Neigong (Nei Kung)--training designed specifically for the development of muscle groups, ligaments, and tendons not usually under conscious control.

3) Waigong (Wai Kung)-- external, i.e. visible, aspects of any martial art including firm balance, flexibility, good posture and stance work, proper mechanical alignment, coordination, and stability.

Ideally, these elements will be developed in a progressive, balanced curriculum designed by an experienced teacher who will guide each student's individual development. Baguazhang (Pa Kua Chang), being a complete martial art system, contains elements of all three of these disciplines.

Baguazhang Master Park Bok Nam has practiced his art for over 32 years. Although Park is Korean, his teacher Lu Shui-T'ien (1894-1978) was a native of Shandong Province, Qingdao City, who fled China during the Sino-Japanese War. Lu was a guerrilla fighter during the war and when the Japanese put a price on his head, he left China, settled in nearby Inchon, Korea and lived in Inchon's large Chinatown.

During the 17 years Park studied with his teacher, his father supported him and he did nothing but practice Baguazhang all day, everyday. His teacher's Baguazhang training program was a balanced program incorporating elements of Qigong, Neigong, and Waigong training. Twice during the seventeen years Park studied with his teacher he went to the mountains of Korea for one year solitary retreats in order to dive deeper into his practice and especially develop the Qigong aspect of his training. This article will discuss some of Park's viewpoints on the practice of Qigong. We will not try to strictly define Qi



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(Ch'i) in this article, but we are going to make the assumption that everyone has something in their body that the Chinese call "Qi." We are going to further assume that this Qi can be divided into the two general categories of internal Qi (nei Qi) and external Qi (wai Qi). Park likes to give the following example to help define these two different types of "energy" in the body. Take two individuals and send them to work; one goes to a construction job and digs ditches, the other goes to an office job, sits at a desk, answers the phone and works on a computer. At the end of the day, both of these individuals feel tired even though their respective expenditure of energy is quite different. The construction worker has spent a lot of physical, external energy; the office worker has expended a lot of internal, mental energy. Even though the work performed and the energy expended is quite different, they both feel fatigue because they both have expended equal amounts of energy.

This example of the difference between internal and external energy expenditure, although simple, will be enough to give you an idea of how Park defines internal and external Qi on the most basic level.

While a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine will define Qi in much more complex terms, Park generally believes in keeping explanations very simple and letting the student reach deeper levels of understanding through direct experience. When teaching, Park will give a student an exercise that produces specific results and allows the student to explain what he or she is feeling rather than give the student lectures on what he or she is supposed to be feeling. Park emphasizes that there is a big difference between knowing something in your head and knowing something in your body. When you "know" it in your body it becomes a reflex occurrence and it will not soon be "forgotten." Once when Park's instructor was teaching, Park started to take notes

on what his teacher was saying. His teacher asked, "What are you doing?" Park replied that he was taking notes so he would not forget what his teacher was telling him. Park's teacher took away the notebook and said, "You go outside right now and practice this 1000 times. This is the only way you will remember!"

Once the student has experienced a sensation as a result of an exercise, Park will ask the student to explain what he or she has felt and then guide the student to deeper experience by adding to the exercise or by teaching a higher level technique. In this manner, all the student's knowledge of Qi, or martial arts practice in general, is experiential. Changing, or adding to, the basic training exercises is an integral part of continual development. Park's experience has told him that once you reach a certain level of development with one exercise, you need to change the exercise or change the breathing technique in order to progress further. However, the only person that can tell you how and when to change your exercise to reach higher levels is an experienced teacher. Everyone is different and thus there are no cookbook methods--all Qigong practice should be closely monitored by an experienced instructor. In the realm of Qigong, an exercise that could help one person could easily damage another.



Balancing Internal and External

In order to live a healthy life, an individual should exercise (in a balanced manner) both the internal Qi and the external Qi. External exercise (swimming, biking, running, weight lifting, martial arts forms and fighting, etc.) will strengthen the external, but will not efficiently or fully exercise the internal. Internal exercise (breath control, meditation, visualization, yoga, and other Qigong training methods) will not efficiently or fully train the external, but will develop the internal. To achieve optimum levels of health, martial arts development, or fighting skill, internal and external training should be balanced.

Modern health, fitness, and physical education disciplines tend to emphasize the external methods of physical development. However, in terms of health and longevity, internal development is equally, if not more, important. As a simple example Park likes to point out that a man who is physically very strong can easily be overcome by internal disorder or disease while an old person, who may be physically weak in terms of muscle strength, could be very robust and strong internally and thus live a long, healthy life. In Chuang Tzu there is a story that is apropos:

T'ien K'ai-chih said, "I have heard the Master say, 'He who is good at life is like a herder of sheep--he

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watches for stragglers and whips them up.”

“What does that mean?” asked Duke Wei.

T’ien K’ai-chih said, “In Lu there was Shan Po - he lived among the cliffs, drank only water, and didn’t go after gain like other people. He went along like that for seventy years and still had the complexion of a little child. Unfortunately, he met a hungry tiger who killed him and ate him up. Then there was Chang Yi - there wasn’t one of the great families fancy mansions that he did not rush off to visit. He went along like that for forty years, and then he developed an internal fever, fell ill, and died. Shan Po looked after what was on the inside and the tiger ate up his outside. Chang Yi looked after what was on the outside and the sickness attacked him from the inside. Both these men failed to give a lash to the stragglers.”

The Baguazhang Qigong System

Park’s system of Qigong has three component parts. These components are initially trained separately in a series of progressive exercises so that the practitioner can develop each component in isolation. Once a student has reached certain levels of development in each of the component areas, more advanced training is initiated which combines the component elements. The component parts in this system include breathing development and breath control exercises to help increase the body’s vital capacity, meditation exercises to help increase awareness, focus and concentration, and body movement exercises to help increase circulation of blood and Qi. Park’s “equation” for Qi development is as follows:

$$\text{Qi Development} = \text{Breathing} + \text{Body Movement} + \text{Mind}$$

Park believes that each component of this equation should be initially trained in isolation starting with very simple exercises. If a beginning student were to try to train breath control, meditation/visualization, and body movement in the same exercise he or she would not gain full benefit from the exercise--it is too much to digest all at once. There is also a higher risk of developing an internal disorder when something too difficult is attempted by a novice.

All systems of Qigong will contain elements similar to those listed above and the simple Qigong methods discussed in this article, although attributed to Baguazhang, will not differ much from other system’s methods. Qigong development that is specific to Baguazhang will not be attempted until the student has experience with the fundamental methods of Qi development. The three component parts of Park’s Baguazhang Qigong training are discussed below with an explanation of some of the introductory exercises.

Breathing

When referring to internal development, the first aspect that Park likes to address is breathing. He points out that a person can live for a number of weeks without food, and days without water, but one cannot survive more than several minutes without air. Developing the ability to breath efficiently and fully will greatly improve the quality of life and health of an individual.

Replenishment of expended energy in the body is accomplished through the intake of food and air. If your breathing is inefficient, your body can easily expend more energy than you replenish. Park feels that one reason so many people become very tired by the end of the day is that their breathing process is inefficient. Through breathing development and breath control exercises you can learn to breathe fully and efficiently, help the body rid itself of toxins, and strengthen the body’s vital capacity.

Breathing exercises and breath control are also key elements in developing skill in internal martial arts practice. To effectively apply “internal energy,” whether it is in a martial application or healing application, a practitioner needs to not only develop proper alignments and mechanics, but they also need to develop the ability to concentrate Qi in their body and move it with the mind. This is no small task. However, through breathing exercises, combined with meditation and other Qigong work, this ability can eventually be attained. Breath control and development exercises are powerful techniques that can greatly improve health, longevity and martial arts development, however, if practiced incorrectly they can also be very dangerous. Moreover, a brea-

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thing exercise practiced perfectly by one whose body is not ready, or is not suited, for that specific exercise can also cause damage. Park teaches breathing exercises as an integral part of his program, however, his teaching is by prescription. Each student is given personal breathing exercises based on their unique needs and their level of development. Park explains that a doctor who is treating a number of patients will not prescribe the same thing to everyone. One person may need more of a certain vitamin, one may need to increase mineral intake, another may need to cut back on cholesterol, etc. Park uses the same approach when assigning breathing techniques to students. His teacher taught him over twenty breathing methods, each with a specific purpose and designed to provide a different result.

Although Park's approach to teaching breathing exercises is by prescription, there are two basic breathing techniques that he will give to almost all of his students to build a foundation. (Students who should not practice these exercises are those with asthma, high blood pressure, and/or other heart or lung disorders. These students will be given separate exercises). When a student begins in Park's school he will be given three breathing exercises, the first two build a foundation and the third is the prescription breathing.

Park will generally give the student a new breathing exercise every 3-4 months depending on his or her progress. When practicing breathing, the student will always practice the first two foundation breathing exercises prior to the third prescription exercise. When the student is ready for a higher level technique, the third exercise is discarded and replaced with a new breathing exercise, however, the first two remain the same.

The first two fundamental breathing exercises Park teaches are the "cleansing breath" and the "filling breath." Park's philosophy is that before the Qi development breathing exercises are practiced, the air in the body needs to be clean and the lungs need to be working at full capacity. When we breathe, we inhale good air (what Park calls "life force energy"), however with that good air we also take in dirty air (what Park calls "bad chemicals"). Anyone who has read the ingredients label on most processed or packaged food also knows that we consume "bad chemicals" in our food as well. In order to operate efficiently, the body will naturally try to rid itself of these bad chemicals. One device the body employs is the digestive/elimination system and another is the respiratory system. With the exhale, the body will eliminate some of the "bad chemicals" it has consumed. The majority of this cleaning process is accomplished at night while the body rests. If you want to test this theory, have someone smell your breathe when you first wake up. What most people call halitosis, Park calls "getting rid of bad chemicals." The "cleansing breath" exercise is designed to help you eliminate the bad chemicals from your body before you practice your Qi development breathing exercises.

The second breathing exercise that is practiced prior to the Qi development breathing exercises is the "filling breath." Most breathing exercises from the East Indian or Chinese yogic traditions focus the breath down in the lower abdomen or tan t'ien. Park states that while the student should eventually learn this type of breathing, a preliminary step is to insure that all five lobes of the lungs are able to fill to capacity. Individuals who have never practiced breathing exercises will usually take shallow breaths. Shallow breathing only exercises the upper part of the lungs and thus breathing is inefficient. On the other hand, some individuals who have been practicing only lower abdomen breathing exercises for a number of years will tend to breathe only in their lower abdomen and the upper chest becomes tight and thus full breathing capacity is restricted. By practicing the "filling breath" everyday before your Qi development breathing exercises, you will insure that all the lobes of the lungs are exercised and the chest can expand properly.

Park recommends that when practicing breathing exercises it is best to practice them in the morning before ten o'clock. The optimum time for practice is the period of time from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunrise. During this period of time the air is best for breathing because when the sun is rising, the night air, which is yin, is changing to the day air, which is yang. In Chinese yin-yang theory, when yin is in the process of changing to yang (or vice-versa), the energy is strongest. It is best to practice breathing exercises outdoors and facing the sun. If practicing indoors, you may want to open a window to get fresh air and even if you are indoors, it is still best to face the sun.

Although Park recommends that you practice your breathing exercises before ten o'clock in the morning, this is strictly a guideline. The underlying factor to consider when determining the best time of day to practice breathing exercises is the balance of yin and yang energy in the air. As a rule of thumb, cold, wet air is yin and warm, dry air is yang. Therefore, Park says that if you live in Texas and it is summer time, by ten o'clock

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in the morning it will be too hot (too much yang air) to practice breathing exercises efficiently. On the other hand, Park also recommends that if it is raining for three days in a row, you skip your breathing exercises for a day because the air is too wet (yin). You can gain benefit by practicing breathing exercises at anytime--in other words, practicing a correct breathing technique at the wrong time of the day will not damage your body. However, when the air is too yin or too yang, the benefit you gain will not be worth the effort expended. If you stick with practicing sometime between one half hour before sunrise and one half hour after sunrise, you will gain the most benefit for the effort expended.

As for the correct body posture to use while practicing breathing exercises, Park states that as long as your body is relaxed and natural, your posture is correct. You can sit on the floor, in a chair, or stand. Sitting on the edge of a straight backed chair, with the spine straight and hands placed on your knees will probably be most comfortable. The tongue lightly touches the upper palate behind the front teeth. Placing the hands on the knees will help to complete an “energy circuit” in the body. If your lower abdomen area is weak, you can also place your hands there. The two basic breathing exercises are described below:

The Cleansing Breath

As described above, the purpose for the cleansing breath is to “clean” the air we inhale, separating the “life force energy” from the “bad chemicals.” To practice this breathing method you will sit in a comfortable position as described above and initiate the exercise by taking a long, deep inhale through the nose filling the chest cavity with air. At the conclusion of the inhale, you begin to exhale through the mouth. The lips are mostly closed during the exhale. You will only allow a very small hole to open between your lips and you will exhale slowly through this hole. The length of the exhale should be two to three times the length of the inhale, however, you want to remain relaxed. Do not try to force your inhale or exhale to be so long that you are not comfortable. The purpose of exhaling slowly through a very small opening in between the lips is to allow the “bad chemicals” to escape while breathing the “life force energy.” Park explains through a simple analogy. Imagine you have a clear plastic bottle in your hand that is three-quarters full of water and has a nozzle at the top (like one of those plastic ketchup or mustard bottles you see in a diner). Imagine you are holding the bottle so that the nozzle is facing up. If you squeeze the bottle very slowly and then stop applying pressure just before the water comes out of the nozzle, the only thing that escapes is the air that was in the top quarter of the bottle. On the other hand, if you were to squeeze the bottle rapidly with force, the air would come out and you would also lose part of the water.

In this analogy, the air in the bottle corresponds to the bad chemicals in the air you inhaled and the water corresponds to the life force energy. If you exhale very slowly through a small opening between the lips, only the bad chemicals will escape and you will retain the life force energy. If you exhale rapidly and in large quantity, life force energy will escape along with the bad chemicals. The cleansing breath exercise should be practiced each morning 15 times.



The Filling Breath

After executing the cleansing breath exercise, you will then practice the “filling breath.” The filling breath exercise is very straight forward. It is designed to help you expand your chest cavity and completely fill all five lobes of the lungs. In this exercise, you will inhale slowly through the nose while trying to expand the chest cavity to full capacity. When no more air can be taken in, you then exhale slowly through the nose. The exhale should be 2-3 times the length of the inhale. During any breathing exercise you should remain comfortable. If you are inhaling too much, too forcefully, or too slowly and you start to feel uncomfortable or get a slight

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headache when you exhale, you should back off and be more gentle. Always be gentle, comfortable and relaxed. Never be forceful or rush your progress. The filling breath exercise is executed 10 times. Prescription Breathing After “warming up” with the cleansing breath and the filling breath exercises, the practitioner will then execute the prescription breathing exercise. This exercise is personally assigned by Park and progress is monitored closely. The exercise is based on individual needs and thus is different for each student. This third exercise is practiced for as many repetitions as the student desires, but the minimum number executed is 15. The student will typically practice this exercise for a minimum of three months at which time Park will check the individual’s progress by feeling different areas of their body while they inhale and exhale. If the student is ready to progress, he or she will discard the old prescription

breathing and be given a new one to practice.

Qi Circulation

The second part of Park’s Baguazhang Qigong training system involves body movements that are designed to improve distal circulation of blood and Qi. This series of exercises starts out with a very simple exercise that will aid the student in initially attaining the “Qi feeling.” Typically this feeling will first manifest itself in the hands as fullness, heat, and/or tingling. The practitioner will continue to practice this first exercise, which Park calls the “basic Qi exercise” until the “Qi feeling” is experienced throughout the body. Park’s “basic Qi exercise” is described below:

1) The practitioner stands in a relaxed posture with the feet parallel and slightly farther than shoulder width apart. The hands hang comfortably down by the sides as shown in photo 1. The eyes are closed, the tongue is on the soft palate behind the upper teeth and the shoulders are relaxed.

2) From the starting position, the practitioner will slowly raise the hands, with the palms facing up, until they reach shoulder height. The shoulders remain relaxed and the elbows are slightly bent.

3) From this position the palms turn in towards each other as the arms move out to the sides. The hands continue to move out to the sides until they are almost extended out directly to the sides. The shoulders remain relaxed and the elbows are slightly bent.

4) Now the arms come back in towards each other traveling the same path as when they were out to the sides.

5) From here the arms bend and the hands come in towards the shoulders with the palms facing out away from the body. Now push the hands back out as if pushing something away from the body.

7) Finally, the arms come down and with the palms facing down as if pushing on a table.

8) When the hands get down to waist height, you totally relax the body and allow the arms to hang loosely by the sides.

9) Repeat steps 1 through 8 for at least 15 repetitions.





While performing the exercise the body, shoulders, and arms should be completely relaxed. The movements should be executed using only about ten percent muscle strength (children should use 20 percent). Concentration is focused on the hands and the awareness is tuned into trying to perceive the Qi feeling. The movements are slow, steady, and continuous. One repetition, from start to finish, should take about one minute to perform. At this stage of training, the body movement is not chained to the breathing and you do not try to use mental visualization to achieve movement of energy in the body or illicit a particular sensation. Remember that Park likes the student to train each component in isolation before the components are combined. The purpose of this exercise is to become aware of the Qi feeling in the body.

While the main purpose of this exercise will be to give the student a feeling of Qi, this is also a Qi balancing exercise. Any Qigong exercise which contains non-specific symmetrical body movement and is practiced with a calm mind and relaxed muscles will help to balance the Qi in the body. Areas in the body that are weak will naturally receive attention in terms of increased Qi and blood flow. When the mind is calm and the circulation in the body is increased, the body, in its innate wisdom, will balance itself. The breathing exercises, which are practiced before the basic Qi exercise, will “prime the pump” by collecting Qi in the body. The movements of the basic Qi exercise will help distribute that Qi where it is most needed.

An eventual goal of this training is to maintain the full body Qi feeling while executing the complex turning, twisting, and coiling movements associated with Baguazhang. This is not an easy task, and thus the training must progress gradually. After the student can maintain the full body Qi feeling in the basic Qi exercise, a slightly more complex Qigong set is practiced which begins to incorporate some of Baguazhang’s characteristic body movements. Once this basic Qigong set is practiced for a sufficient amount of time, the student will then graduate to a simple Baguazhang Qigong circle-walking form.

As in all aspects of training, Park starts the student practicing the Qigong form with very simple movements and then continues to add more complex maneuvers in progressive stages. The focus of the Qigong form will be to maintain the full body Qi feeling, however, by this stage in the training process the student will begin experiencing this “feeling” at deeper levels in the body. In terms of Qi circulation, Park talks about three areas of concern; the skin, the nerves, and the bones. By “circulation of Qi in the skin” Park is referring to circulation through the meridians and channels defined in traditional Chinese medicine. This would include circulation in the major meridians and channels as well as the smaller network of collaterals or, *lou*. The sensation of Qi and blood circulation at the skin level will be the first the student will experience. These sensations are different for each student, but will typically be experienced as tingling, fullness, and/or heat. Circulation in the nerves is slightly more advanced and will usually be experienced after the student has been practicing Qigong for a fairly long time (although it will vary from person to person). The student will typically experience a sensation in the hands, or other parts of the body, like an electrical shock when Qi begins to circulate at this level. This feeling can be somewhat uncomfortable at first. Feeling the Qi circulation in the bones is usually experienced at the more advanced stages of practice, again this sensation is different for different people. When a student begins to feel Qi circulation at the nerve or bone level, Park will modify their training program to help bring the student to still higher levels of experience.

Meditation

The term “meditation” means many different things to different people. Depending on the intent and focus of the meditative process a wide variety of results can be obtained. Some individuals meditate to reduce stress

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and tension, others meditate to increase levels of awareness or improve the ability to concentrate, while many others meditate for spiritual development. The type of meditative technique you practice will depend on the result you want to obtain. Like all techniques taught in Park's school, the first meditation exercise the student will learn is very direct and simple. This method is designed to help relax the body and mind and improve the ability to concentrate and maintain focus. You will start the exercise sitting in a comfortable position with the eyes closed. The breathing is relaxed and follows a natural rhythm, the meditation at this level is not chained to a breathing technique. While maintaining a natural breathing rhythm, a relaxed body and mental calmness; you start slowly counting backwards from 300. Each number is visualized clearly in the mind's eye and spoken, either silently to yourself or aloud. Exactly what form the number appears when visualized will vary with each person. It is best to keep it plain and simple. While counting, your mind will inevitably wander off to other thoughts and you will lose track of the numbers. Each time this happens, bring yourself back to the counting. Park will occasionally check the student's progress by having the student perform the meditation and count out loud. If the student has developed their ability to concentrate sufficiently, Park will allow them to move up to a higher number, maybe 500. Eventually the students will move on to other concentration and visualization techniques which will help their ability to maintain mental calmness and focus for longer periods of time. The above mentioned visualizations are not chained to the breathing and do not entail visualizing the circulation of Qi in the body or attempting to move Qi with the mind. Remember, every part of Park's Qigong training is practiced in isolation until the student has attained certain levels of development. While there are many techniques that involve mental visualization to aid the flow of Qi through specific meridians or to certain points of the anatomy, Park says that these exercises are dangerous for the beginning student to practice. While these exercises are valid at a certain stage of training, the beginner to meditation has not yet developed the ability to focus the attention, without distraction, long enough to practice visualization techniques effectively. Park states that the practitioner is not ready for visualization techniques that involve Qi circulation until he or she can maintain meditative focus while counting from 500 down to 0 slowly. If you try this exercise and you lose count or become distracted from the steady, deliberate counting, then you are not ready for Qi movement visualization techniques. If you are mentally moving Qi through your body--through the "microcosmic orbit" or any of the other circuits used in popular Qigong training--and you cannot maintain complete focus and concentration on what you are doing, you are in danger of having an over abundance of Qi get trapped in the head. Once you get a sufficient amount of Qi flowing in the body through mental visualization, if your mind becomes distracted, the Qi will rise to the head. Park calls this shang Qi (rising Qi). Shang Qi can result in severe headaches, intense pressure in the head, or migraines and is not much fun. Sometimes it takes weeks to go away. Brand new students may not be in a lot of danger because they have not built up strong enough energy in the body. However, once you have practiced the powerful breathing exercises and Qi circulation exercises for a few months, your Qi is sufficiently strong enough to cause damage if your Qigong meditation is practiced incorrectly. This is one reason why meditative techniques are kept separate from Qi circulation and breathing training in Park's school until the student has developed to certain levels in all three of these areas. Only an experienced teacher will know when you are ready to move onto advanced Qi circulation visualization techniques.

Putting It All Together

Once the student has developed all of the component parts of the Qigong practice, the training will shift and the student will then begin to learn how to piece together all of the component parts and execute them simultaneously. Park is fond of saying that no matter how good the parts of an engine are, unless you know how to put them together to build the engine, you don't have anything but a pile of expensive parts. Although the elements of the Baguazhang Qigong system are trained separately at first, the key to advanced development is in knowing how to fit the component parts together to form the complete equation.

Qi Development = Mind + Breathing + Body movement

However, the manner in which all of these pieces fit together and the specific training employed to accom-

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plish this is beyond the scope of this article and should only be attempted under the guidance of an experienced teacher. As we have emphasized throughout this article, the beginner will practice the components separately. However, this is not accomplished in a random manner. There is a specific sequence utilized in daily training in order to achieve the best results. When practicing the complete spectrum of a martial arts training system including the Qigong, Neigong, and Waigong components, the Qigong is always practiced as the last part of any practice session. The external is trained first and then you move towards the internal practice to end the workout. If practicing all three elements of this Qigong method, the first exercise to practice is the breathing component. The breathing exercises will help relax and calm the body while gathering the Qi that will be utilized during the Qi circulation practice. After the breathing exercises, the next component that will be trained is the meditation exercise. The breathing exercises, which help to calm the mind, relax the body and cleanse the system prepare you for obtaining the best results from meditative practice. After meditation, the Qi circulation exercise is practiced. This exercise will help circulate and balance the energy in the body. After practicing the Qi circulation exercise, you will want to remain relaxed and calm for ten to fifteen minutes and not practice any “external” exercise for appropriately one hour. This will give the newly circulated Qi and blood time to help the body heal itself without disturbance.

Conclusion

This article has provided a brief introduction to the Qigong training system of Master Park Bok Nam. The exercises described above will typically be given to the beginner during his or her first few weeks of training and thus they are very basic. Park’s complete system of Qigong training is designed to gradually lead the beginner from these basics through progressively advanced techniques in a balanced and individually prescribed curriculum. In order to gain the greatest benefit from Qigong practice it is wise to participate in a balanced, progressive program under the guidance of a qualified instructor. If you start out with very simple exercises and build slowly without trying to rush results, your development will be complete and you will avoid complications.