

THE SIX HEALING (OR HEALTHY) SOUNDS CHI KUNG (QI GONG)  
(LINEAGE G.M.° GIN FOON MARK, 5<sup>th</sup> GENERATION OF THE KWONG SAI JOOK LUM GEE SOUTHERN  
PRAYING MANTIS KUNG FU STYLE)

The lineage of Master Mark and the results he achieved would ask for a list too long to be related here, so we will only hint at some aspects of particular relevance. Born in a family boasting a long and rich tradition in the field of martial, healing, meditative and culinary arts, as well as in calligraphy and acupuncture, he began his studies about Six Healing Sounds Chi Kung at the age of nine in several temples in China and Macao, among them the Sil Lum temple in Chun San and the one in Hoi Chung. Under the guidance of buddhist monk Yut Kai Faat Si (Ngut Kai Faa Si) – the renowned sage with eight fingers whose name means “Moon (reflecting) in the brook” – he learnt the basics of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and of acupuncture. So famous was this illustrious holy man, that upon his death his remains were embalmed and the case where they are kept is destination of pilgrimages, as a sign of homage and respect. During his life, Master Mark learnt almost all of the “internal” and “external” Chi Kung exercises, among them Iron Skirt, Iron Palm and Cotton Palm, and also healing and acupuncture techniques. During his many journeys to Beijing since 1979, he kept studying – under the guidance of a teacher known as the “Old Master” – the Six Healing Sounds Chi Kung. Why did he choose eventually this one, among the myriad of Chi Kung systems? Essentially because he understood that it is the most effective and at the same time the easiest to learn. Among its benefits, it raises energetic level, grows Chi (or Breathe, or Vital Essence) and improves the well-being of the practitioner (however it is different from other arts – like Yoga and TaiJi – and from other Chi Kung systems); for women, it affects positively on pre-menstrual syndrome, on menopause and even on fertility; it supports energy circulation in the main meridians of the human body. This happens through the emission of distinctive sounds – linked to the five elements of TCM – whose vibrations have the effect of stimulating the organs and the correlated tissues; keep in mind that even in the ancient “Ming Treatise” are underlined the healing and preventive effects of these vocal vibrations, as well as the extraordinary effectiveness of the practice.

What does it involve, and why is this Chi Kung method so effective and characteristic? First of all it is very natural and straightforward, combining harmoniously breathing, body movements and sounds to create a stimulation to specific organs and to the corresponding meridians and acupuncture points; it improves blood circulation and, by the means of diaphragmatic breathing, allows energy to flow and to send it to an internal organ, according to the hour of the day and to the effect moon phases have on meridians. It is worth remembering that Chi Kung is tightly interwoven with TCM, whose origins are lost since the dawn of time. So it is quite likely that at the beginning there was a convergence of different causes and of different skills, that contributed to the birth of this art: the first to get involved dealt with Taoist meditation, TCM and martial arts. Tradition says that the sounds were recognized thousands of years ago by Taoist monks, who studied them deeply to find out their effects on Chi flow. So six sounds (hence the name of this Chi Kung) were developed, typical and corresponding to just as many internal organs, and specific movements and body stances were identified to be combined with the vocal emission with the purpose of activating the energy channels. Without going into too much detail, it will suffice here to remember that TCM has many a thousand years long tradition and history: long time ago people likely began to investigate about the sounds associated with the organs by manipulating the patient and by auscultation of his wrist, touching and applying typical pressures on the corresponding acupuncture points and taking note of the sounds emitted by the treated person. Only thanks to a long research – which results have been written down and passed from Master to Master and from generation to generation – it was so understood that there were different sounds that could be associated and assimilated to the respective organs. By the means of this interaction, a thermal exchange takes place inside the different areas of the body, and it is possible to direct the heat to the digestive system, to later release it through the mouth. To explain Six Healing Sounds Chi Kung we chose, for the first time, to tell how a direct lesson led by Master Gin Foon Mark takes place. According to Taoist tradition, after having chosen a suitable place, i.e. with enough chairs and a rich air exchange (if training indoors, Master Mark to further a constant air exchange can turn on some fans, keeping them at some distance from the practitioners), the Master and all the participants arrange themselves in a circle. Beyond having an important energetic and symbolic value – this way it is favored the creation and development of Chi for the entire class – this has also a practical function, because

the Sifu can be seen well by all the students. Then, after having made the *Salute*, everyone takes his seat. Usually Master Mark starts the lesson by telling anecdotes about Chi Kung, stories about his masters, or listing some fundamental acupuncture points; during this parts he willingly accepts questions to create and promote a good harmony among the group, and also to make tradition take roots in the students so it can be perpetuated.

From the beginning to the end, the Chi Kung lesson tends to the best psycho-physical wellness of the practitioners, and every single move has been studied during the centuries to favor relaxing and dissolution of tensions. For instance, it is important to take a comfortable and relaxed posture, without overdoing: it is not proper to letting go, sliding down the backrest, instead one of the first teachings is about the correct stance. Torso has to be straight but not tensed, while shoulders are relaxed and the back of the hands lies on the legs, palms up. This to allow internal energy to flow properly inside the body. To make this important and – only seemingly simple – concept to be deeply understood, the Master brings up the idea of a tube full of water. By turning on the tap, water starts flowing freely, but if the tube is bent, or worse knotted, the flow would be blocked. Chi, actually, flows continuously in our organism, and it has to flow freely in our spine: one of the basic notions is in fact not to squeeze or block it in any way.

“Massage your feet first”: here actually many acupuncture points are concentrated, and with this sentence Master Mark is used to start, after having asked the participants to remove their shoes. It is better to wear comfortable clothes, that would not constrict the body and therefore energy, and that would anyway allow skin transpiration. The other advice – often repeated before and during class – is to practice a correct breathing. “Inhale with the nose and exhale with the mouth”: while taking air, the tongue should be brought towards the upper palate, vice versa during expiration phase it should go downwards and the mouth has to be opened, with no less than two finger width. When someone doesn’t open it enough, Master Mark literally mimics the gesture of putting index and middle finger pointing at the open mouth, repeating “two fingers”. It is a good self-check method during practice. One of the keys for a correct Chi Kung practice is actually represented by diaphragmatic breathing: “Blow up belly like bellows”, following the natural breathing rhythm, that shouldn’t neither be forced nor slowed down. Checking is very simple here too: it is enough to place a hand near the belly-button to verify.

Breathing is likely the most natural and continuous practice that a human being does; not everybody, however, does it right. Indications are clear and precise: lungs have to be filled fully, to later empty them of all the withheld air during the following expiration phase (at this time it is important to tense the perineum).

To help oneself and to improve circulation, it is fine to imagine that energy follows a circular motion: she flows inside us coming through the nose, going down to *Dan Tian (Field of Cinnabar)* to later go up again and then going out through the mouth, always in a cyclical, harmonic and natural way.

*(...To be continued on the next issue of NMHM...)*