

Hello all,

Welcome to *Alternativz*, Volume 2, Issue 11, *The Qigong Experience, Part 2, Harvesting Qi*. I am prompted to choose this title by Marvin Smalheiser's article *Wuji Qigong: Harvesting Inner Resources*, published in *Tai Chi Magazine*, Volume 20, Number 3, 1996. (Thank you to my good friend and colleague Carry Beekink for reminding me of it.)

Smalheiser's article chronicles Cai Song Fang's visit to California, the article and the visit roughly coinciding with release of the book, *Wuji Breathing Exercise* (1995), the first publication of which I'm aware that describes the essential practice of Wuji Qigong in English.



Figure 1: Me demonstrating "harvesting qi".
Yellow is inhalation, green is exhalation.

The first paragraph of Smalheiser's article describes the practice as *harvesting internal energy* and that it is, or was, a Yang family secret transmission. In this issue I'd like to elucidate the meaning and the method of "harvesting internal energy" – as I've experienced it. I came to this understanding in the period 1995 - 2005 via my simultaneous study of *Wuji Breathing Exercise* (available at coherence.com) and methods described in Huang and Wurmbrand's *The Primordial Breath (Volume I)*, which concerns itself almost wholly with this matter. As a point of interest, I launched the Coherent Breathing method in 2004.

What happens, as described by Cai, interpreted by Fong Ha, and written by Smalheiser, is that awareness grows outwardly from the navel, extending to every extremity. This unification of bodily awareness is described as "integration of the body and mind". They go on to say that with practice all of the meridians of the body open up. This is also my experience. While emphasizing the importance of relaxation, the only counsel the article offers regarding "breathing" itself is that breathing should be "even". I learned via practice and biofeedback that it should be both "even" and relatively slow, i.e. nominally 5 breaths per minute, that 5 breaths per minute is where the average adult ends up when breathing evenly and consciously relaxing. In this regard, my intense exploration of Wuji Qigong was very formative and continues to open new vistas to me. [Readers may also find this back issue of Alternativz of interest.](#)

In fact, breathing is a critical element for successful practice of Wuji Qigong. As explained in our book *Wuji Qi Gong & The Secret Of Immortality*, breathing is the element of Heaven, *Air*. Without Air being proper, relaxation cannot happen, the Earth element cannot function, and the alchemy cannot occur. Here I posit that without correct breath, the opening up of the meridians does not happen and qi cannot be "harvested". If qi 氣 is fundamentally something we acquire via breathing, then doesn't this stand to reason?

This notion, "harvesting qi" refers to an experience and sensation of *collecting* what we breathe, extracting "this something" (qi) from the air that we inhale. When we do extract it, it substantializes the body. This is a profound benefit of Wuji Qigong and builds Yin. In practicing Wuji Qigong as a novice, this is difficult to understand, but if one simply does it, following the principles, the understanding will come, this being that there is something in the air, besides air, that nourishes and strengthens the body. It is this *air element* that Wuji Qigong and qigong in general aim to extract from the air we breathe.

Here I acknowledge that the food we eat and the water we drink is also a source of qi, but this form of qi is “food qi” not “air qi”. However, diaphragm movement is also critical to the extraction of the nutritional essence (qi) from the food we eat. This is because diaphragm movement facilitates digestion. It does this by rhythmically massaging the organs of digestion, facilitating the movement of gas, digestive matter, and blood. An outcome of good digestion is arisal of the clear, essence which supports Shen, spirit.

In time, we cultivate the experience that when we exhale, we are able to separate *what* we inhale from *what* we exhale. What do I mean by this? I mean that we are able to discern that when we exhale, something heavy is left behind, and that this something sinks into the body, *heavy* like lead or gold, a highly Yin agent. This *element* can be accumulated and built up in the body, yin deficiency being a fundamental consequence of aging, or the other way around(?) This is how Tai Chi masters become so heavy to the touch. Even a person of small stature can seem like they weigh many hundreds of pounds and have both the mental and physical power to go with it. So how is it done? Like the study of any topic there are prerequisites. These are:

1) That one practice Wuji Qigong until the body becomes open and integrated. This is a relatively long term proposition and needs to be aided by yoga or tao yin, and of course breathing. The “integration” is a function of waking up the navel and its connection to every cell in the body.

2) Yoga, tao yin, yoga nidra, [The Six Bridges](#), play an important part in the discovery process where one places the mind on and in every body part. This wakes up the body making it accessible by the mind, by consciousness. Once this is complete, one can move their mind around their body with great openness and freedom, without restriction, as though the body is completely homogenous. This homogeneity and connect-edness between the navel and every cell in the body *is* the “integration” that Cai refers to.

Once one is proficient at this, one can orient all or a portion of Wuji Qigong practice to *harvesting qi*. Personally, I devote about 10 minutes per day to this specific aspect of the practice, although I could stand to do more. It involves this step, this experience:

A) While standing or sitting in keeping with Man United With Heaven And Earth and the mind on the navel, inhale for 6 seconds and exhale for six seconds. Be sure to relax everything deeply when exhaling.

B) Focus on allowing exhalation to occur completely without effort. In other words, we rely on the elasticity of the lungs, muscles, tissues to “exhale”, where we may have trained conscious exhalation, *now we want to let it occur of its own accord*. Exhalation may take a little longer than 6 seconds depending on the state of the nasal turbinates, etc. Its a matter of allowing the body to let go during exhalation, the diaphragm in particular, letting gas exit the lungs very, very softly. Its like panning gold if you’d done that. It requires a very gentle touch. We’re looking for the gas to exit but the essence to remain behind.

C) Keeping the mind gently on the navel but paying attention to the entire body, when we exhale we allow this essence to sink into the body, into the bones. When things are “right” one will feel heavier almost immediately. This is the yin tonic function of the practice.

D) Like Wuji Qigong in general, go about this process very deliberately and without haste.

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