

The Qigong Flow

By Leigh Ann Henion

Article from The Mountain Times Newspaper Boone, NC 2002

If you were to visit a doctor of Chinese medicine, chances are you would be encouraged to take part in the practice of Qigong (pronounced "chee kung"), a holistic workout that develops mind and body. According to Chinese medicine, chi is the universal life-force, or energy, which is circulated throughout the body along invisible energy channels known as meridians. The function of Qigong is to assist in the circulation of chi throughout the body.

The practice of Qigong was brought to India from China where it was brought to the Shaolin Temple and was embraced by Tibetan Buddhists. The Tibetan form of Qigong has remained virtually unaltered for millennia because of Tibet's isolation.

Anthony Marco Azzaro CA Dipl Ac Acupuncturist and Qigong Practitioner/Instructor located in Banner Elk, NC, studied Qigong with a Tibetan master while he was a student of acupuncture at ATOM College in Florida. Though he studied many forms, the seven star exercise designed after the big dipper and its Tibetan lineage that attracted him. The seven star form is not a form of martial arts; it's a form of healing meditation. Similar to tai chi, a relative of Qigong that people are most exposed to, Qigong is a series of movements meant to help energy move freely throughout the body.

He said, "I had quite a few professors that taught different forms, but I became very attached to the seven star. There is something about the Tibetan aspects...like eating well and breathing right, Qigong becomes part of you." Azzaro described the benefits of Qigong when he said, "When water stagnates it becomes impure and bacteria ridden, when it is flowing it's fresh. It's the same with the energy in people's bodies. Qigong helps keep the energy flowing like fresh water."

When Azzaro teaches the seven star form there are no printed handouts given to students. All instruction is spoken from teacher to student in keeping with the tradition of the form. Several of Azzaro's students have encouraged him to start an ongoing class instead of the workshop style sessions he has previously conducted. In the advanced classes he teaches Sanskrit chants that have been handed down in the oral tradition of the art.

In the lavender colored room where he teaches his classes at Ashi Therapy in Banner Elk, Tibetan prayer flags line the far wall. The flags are lined with prayers, intricately scripted in the ancient beauty of Sanskrit. As he finished a cup of Chinese tea, Azzaro looked up at the flags overhead and said, "When the wind hits them it's supposed to disperse the energy. It sends out the prayers. All the little prayers." As he rose to get himself another cup of tea, Azzaro's indoor fountain flowed on. Nothing is stagnate in a life centered around Qigong.