



Practice 6.

THE MICROCOSMIC ORBIT

THE SMALL HEAVEN MEDITATION

The Purpose:

To activate and circulate your energy in two of the Eight Extraordinary Meridians - the Governor Meridian/Du Mo up the center line of your back, and the Conception Meridian/Ren Mo down the center line of your front.

Overview and Explanation:

These two meridians divide the body into left and right, and affect every other energy channel and function, because they have 'Meeting Points' along them which influence and affect all of the other meridians.

The following instructions have been simplified and modified for people new to this practice. The points listed are all classical Acupuncture Points, which can be found in any Acupuncture point chart or book. For people wanting more precision, and to know how to locate the specific points, recommended books are listed separately at the end of Part I.

Preparation:

Minimum: The Ba Gua.

Optimal: Smile at Yourself, The Ba Gua, The Six Healing Sounds, Cleanse The Emotions, Cultivate The Virtues.

THE PRACTICE:

When you begin this practice, do it lightly and gently at first, then slowly increase duration and intensity as you develop more experience and ability. At the beginning hold your attention at each of the following points for the same amount of time and

the same number of breaths. Later, as you develop sensitivity, you will develop the ability to "read" how your energy is doing at any given point, and to hold it there for greater or shorter periods of time as needed. You can vary the amount of time you practice, or hold your attention for a specific number of breaths at each point as a way of timing yourself.

Sit on the edge of a chair in an upright position (unless you have back problems, in which case sit whichever way is most comfortable). Place your knees shoulder-width apart and feet flat on the ground facing forward. Close your eyes, focus your attention inside yourself.

Clasp your palms in front of you - left facing up and right facing down on top of it. Let your palms rest comfortably in your lap or across your abdomen.

The Navel

Put your attention into your navel. Imagine that you are breathing in and out through your navel, until you begin to feel an energy sensation there - this may feel warm, or full, or tingling, or some such feeling.

The Sexual Point

As you breathe out, use your mind to send your energy down the front mid-line of your abdomen to your sexual point. For women this point is approximately 2 inches/5 cm below the navel, or 3 fingers width. For men the sexual point is at the top of the pubic bone. Hold your energy there with your mind. Breathe in and out at this point for three or more times. Notice how this feels.

The Perineum

As you breathe out, use your mind to send your energy to your perineum - the area of soft tissue between your inside thighs at the top of your legs, and between your genitals and anus. Hold your energy there. Breathe in and out at your perineum for three or more times. Notice how this feels.

The Base Of The Sacrum

Next, use your mind to direct your attention and energy up your back to the base of your sacrum, to the point where the sacrum meets your tail-bone/coccyx. Hold your attention there. Breathe in and out at this point three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Opposite The Navel

Now, send your attention and energy to the point in the center of your back and spine, directly opposite your navel. Hold your mind, attention and energy at this point. Breathe in and out here three or more times. Notice how this feels.

The Adrenals

Send your mind and energy up the middle of your back to the point opposite the center of your solar plexus. This is the adrenal point. Hold your mind there. Breathe in and out at this point for three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Rear Heart

Then continue up the center of your spine to the point opposite the center of your chest and heart. Hold your mind there. Breathe in and out at this point for three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Base of the Neck

Continue upwards to the point where the base of the neck meets the top of the shoulders, where the cervical vertebra meet the thoracic vertebra. Hold your mind, attention, and energy at this point. Breathe in and out here three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Base Of The Skull

Now, send your energy up the mid-line of your back to the point at the base of your skull, where your skull meets the top vertebra of your neck. Hold your attention there. Breathe in and out at this point for three or more breaths. Notice how this feels.

Crown Of The Head

Next, bring your energy to the crown point, just back from the very top of your head, at the fontanelle where the skull bones meet together. Feel your energy accumulate there. Breathe in and out three or more times. Notice how this feels.

The Brow

Then, bring your energy down the mid-line of the front of your forehead to the point between your eyes. Feel your energy grow warm and soft. Hold your mind there. Breathe in and out three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Roof Of Your Mouth

Now, connect the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, so that your tongue-tip finds the most sensitive and active spot on the hard palate behind your teeth. This connects the Governor Channel and the Conception Channel together, like turning on a light switch. You may feel a tingling sensation. Hold your energy there for three or more breaths. Notice how this feels.

The Throat

Bring your attention down through your tongue and throat to the point just below your Adam's Apple. Hold your attention, mind, and energy there for three or more breaths. Notice how this feels.

Center Of The Chest

Now, bring your mind and Qi down the front mid-line of your sternum to the point in the center of your chest. This is between the nipples on a man. Hold your mind and energy there. Breathe in and out at this point three or more times. Notice how this feels.

Solar Plexus

Next, bring your energy down to the mid-point of your solar plexus, mid-way between the bottom of your sternum and your navel. Hold it there. Breathe in and out at this point for three or more breaths. Notice how this feels.

And Back To The Navel

Finally, bring your energy back home to your navel. Hold your mind and energy there. Pay attention to how this feels. Breathe in and out three or more times.

You have now completed a circuit of The Microcosmic Orbit / The Small Heaven Meditation.

To Continue:

If you wish to continue practicing at this stage, then you can circulate around the Microcosmic Orbit as long as you feel comfortable with this practice - 3, 6, 9, times, or more. Be careful not to overdo this in the early stages of practice.

Ascend up the back, from the perineum to the crown point as you breath in.

Descend down the front to the perineum as you breath out. Circulate through the Microcosmic Orbit as you slowly inhale and exhale, as you breathe in and out.

End by bringing your attention to the Navel and sealing your Qi there by spiraling in and out.

Sealing Your Energy

When you want to end, do the following procedure.

To seal your energy back into your navel, spiral out with your mind from the middle of your navel 9 times, until the top of the spiral ends at the base of your sternum at the 12 o'clock position. Then reverse, coming back in to the center of the navel in 6 spirals.

However, as previously, men and woman do this in opposite directions, as follows:

Men spiral-out to the left/clockwise, and women spiral-out to the right/counter-clockwise. When you have reached the limit of your sternum at 12 o'clock, reverse direction to come back into the center of your navel in 6 spirals.

Then, most importantly, disconnect your tongue. This disconnects the Governor and the Conception Channels. It is essential to do this if you are ending this practice.

To close, place your palms over the navel, left first for men, right first for women, and concentrate your energy and attention there. Check how you now feel. Record it in your memory library.

Bathing Your Eyes

When you have finished the Microcosmic Orbit, rub your palms together and place them over your eyes. Feel the warmth and energy in your palms calm and refresh your eyes. Then, wash your whole face with the energy in your palms. Finally bring your hands down to rest any way comfortable on your thighs.

Slowly open your eyes, and let the outside come into you. See how you now feel.

You have now completed The Microcosmic Orbit/The Small Heaven Meditation - circulating your energy from your navel, down the yin Conception Meridian to your perineum, then up the yang

Governor Meridian (up the center of your back and over your head to your mouth), and then through the tongue on down the yin Conception Meridian (from your mouth down the front line in the middle of your abdomen) back to your navel.

This practice can be done at different intensities. It is advisable to start lightly and gently at first, and slowly increase duration and intensity as you develop. Repeat this exercise whenever you wish, for differing amounts of time or differing numbers of breaths at each point, as you feel the need.

If during the course of this practice you meet an unexpected congestion or energy blockage at some point, then go back through each of the points in the reverse direction, bringing it back to the navel, and seal your energy there. Try the complete practice again at another time. Persevere.

The Microcosmic Orbit is one of the most important basic practices in Qigong, because it has such a pervasive effect on so many levels. It is also known as The Lesser Heavenly Cycle (Xiao Jiu Tien). It connects to, and opens up, all of the major organ meridians. All of these meridians have 'Meeting Points' along the Governor Meridian or the Conception Meridian and doing The Microcosmic Orbit activates these meeting points. It is the primary circuit which every other channel connects with.

To really get the feel and sense for the Microcosmic Orbit practice, it is best to get personal instruction from a teacher.

How do you now feel? Remember that feeling. Take it deep inside yourself. Record it. Use it as a reference - a comparison and measure - for yourself in the future. It is your experience of your energy moving at its best. Feel your energy, enjoy it. You can achieve this any time you wish, by just practicing Qigong.

You can cultivate your energy - and your life - right now. All you have to do is Practice.

Sitting quietly in a chair doing this practice for an hour may give you as much refreshment as two weeks vacation on a beach!

To Continue:

The Microcosmic Orbit is a complete practice, described in the classics and rooted in pre-history. It is a primary practice and can be done just for itself, to great benefit.

It is also a starting place for many other practices.

And, like the Ba Gua, it can be the way to end other practice sequences. Although it is not a necessity, you can always finish any sequence with The Microcosmic Orbit and The Ba Gua.

List of Acupuncture Points

CV = Conception Channel

GV = Governor Channel

With English name first, followed by the Chinese Romanization

(Please note that there are various ways of translating the Chinese names into English. The translations used here are in Wades-Giles transliteration system. The version here is from Prof. J.R. Worsley 'Traditional Chinese Acupuncture : Volume 1 : Meridians and Points.)

Navel	CV 8	Spirit Deficiency / Shen Chueh
Sexual (w)	CV 6	Sea of Chi / Chi Hai
Sexual (m)	CV 2	Crooked Bone / Chu Ku
Perineum	CV 1	Meeting of Yin / Hui Yin
Sacrum	GV 2	Loins Correspondence / Yao Shu
Opp Navel	GV 4	Gate of Life / Ming Men
Adrenals	GV 6	Middle of the Spine / Chi Chung
Rear Heart	GV 11	Spirit Path / Shen Tao
Base of neck	GV 14	Great Hammer / Ta Chui
Base of Skull	GV 16	Wind Palace / Feng Fu
Crown of Head	GV 20	One Hundred Meetings / Pai Hui
Brow	GV 24.5	Original Cavity of Spirit / Yin Tang
Roof of Mouth	None	No Name
Throat	CV 22	Heaven Rushing Out / Tien Tu
Center Chest	CV 17	Within the Breast / Shan Xhung
Solar Plexus	CV 12	Middle Duct / Chung Wan
Navel	CV 8	Spirit Deficiency / Shen Chueh