

should be performed at least six times, using only the breath, either standing in Horse, or sitting on edge of a stool with your spine erect. After each exhalation, pause to relax the body, regulate the breath with a few ordinary abdominal breaths, clear the mind, then do another syllable.

2) When practising the syllables in conjunction with the physical movements, be sure not to tense the muscles or tighten the joints. Especially keep the shoulders as loose and relaxed as possible. Use the mind of intent to open up the vital energy points between the eyebrows and midway between the nipples, so that energy may flow freely between head and torso.

Chee-gung hand balls (Fig. 28)

Since ancient times, Chinese calligraphers, painters, *chee-gung* healers, martial artists, and others whose livelihoods depended on strong, well-balanced hand energy and nimble fingers have used this simple but highly effective method for balancing their internal energies, toning the tendons of their hands and arms, and increasing the flow of energy to their palms and fingers. *Chee-gung* hand balls are two balls of equal size and weight, made of steel, marble, agate, or jade. Though expensive, jade is by far the best material, thanks to its capacity to conduct and purify energy.

Held in the palm of one hand, the balls are rolled in a circle by manipulating them with the fingers, counterclockwise in the right

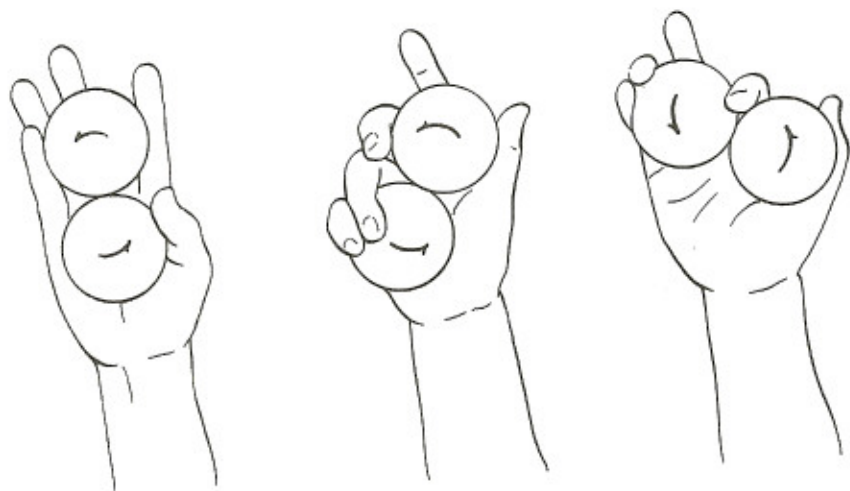


Fig. 28 *Chee-gung* hand balls.

hand, clockwise in the left. At first you'll feel clumsy doing this, and the balls will clack loudly against each other as you try to spin them round in your palms. But with a week or two of daily practice, you'll be able to rotate them smoothly and swiftly, keeping the balls in contact the entire time, so that they make a smooth humming sound rather than clacking randomly against each other.

Hold the two balls in the palm of one hand with the forearm held away from the body and parallel to the ground. Start the balls rolling by drawing the inside ball towards your body with the little and ring fingers, thereby causing the other one to roll forwards towards the index and middle finger, with the thumb preventing it from rolling off to the outside. Then extend the little and ring fingers forwards again and let the outside ball roll inwards towards them, pulling it towards the body, and continue rolling the balls around in circles. Do this until the tendons in your hand, wrist, and forearm feel a bit sore or numb, then switch hands. You can practise this any time of day or night, while reading or watching a film, on a bus or train or plane.

This exercise is a very effective way to harmonize the Five Elemental Energies and stimulate the organ-energies whose meridians run into the fingers: lungs, large intestine, heart, small intestine, pericardium, and Triple Burner. Balancing internal energies has long been a primary method for preventing disease and degeneration in Taoist alchemy and Chinese medicine. The rhythmic flexing of finger, hand, wrist, and arm tendons increases strength and coordination in the hands, cures and prevents arthritis and rheumatism in all joints from fingers to shoulders, and provides an excellent warm-up prior to practising calligraphy, painting, surgery, massage, or any other skill that requires digital dexterity and a strong flow of energy to the hands.

Cool-down collection and storage set

The set of collection exercises given below should be practised at the conclusion of *chee-gung* workouts. It only takes five to ten minutes and serves to draw the energy you've generated and circulated during the workout back down into the Lower Elixir Field for storage. From there it will gradually flow into the Microcosmic Orbit of the Governing and Conception channels, which serve as *chee* reservoirs, feeding the accumulated energy into the twelve main organ meridians as required. Failure to collect and store energy at the end of a *chee-gung* workout may result in the wasteful loss of energy known as *san-chee*, 'scattered energy', which happens