

SHAOLIN 18 LOHAN HANDS

Many readers have asked me about the famous Shaolin Eighteen Lohan Hands. They were taught by the great Bodhidharma in 527 BCE to monks at the Shaolin Monastery in China when this First Patriarch of the Shaolin arts found the monks weak and often sleepy during mediation, which is the essential path towards enlightenment.

The Shaolin Eighteen Lohan Hands are fundamental chi Kung exercises that can bring tremendous benefits if they are practiced as chi Kung. Over the years, I have successfully used selections from the Eighteen Lohan Hands to help many people overcome illness, including so-called incurable diseases.

But if they are practiced as physical exercise, which is often the case nowadays, naturally the practitioner will only get the benefits of physical exercise. The crucial difference between chi Kung exercise and physical exercise lies not in the outward form (which can be the same for both types of exercise), but in the internal dimensions of energy and mind. If one does not know what these internal dimensions are, it is unlikely that he (or she) has practiced chi Kung, although he may have performed the outward form for years.

At the Shaolin Monastery, these Eighteen Lohan Hands evolved into a kungfu set called Eighteen Lohan Fist, which forms the prototype of Shaolin Kungfu today. Nevertheless, the Eighteen Lohan Hands continued to be practiced as chi Kung exercise.

Because of its long history, there are many versions of the Eighteen Lohan Hands being taught today. Shown below are the Eighteen Lohan Hands taught in my Shaolin Wahnam School. The illustrations are reproduced from a manual used more than 10 years ago by my chi kung students.

1. Lifting the Sky

This pattern is also found in many other kinds of chi kung. This is not surprising because "Lifting the Sky" is one of the best of all chi kung exercises.

2. Shooting Arrows

The holding of the hands is in the "One-Finger Zen" hand form, which is a typical Shaolin hand form. If you see someone holding the hand in the form of a fist with one finger sticking out, you can reasonably conclude that he has not learnt it in a proper way from a Shaolin master.

3. Plucking Stars

These illustrations can only show the outward form of chi kung. Once again, I wish to stress that chi kung form alone is not chi kung. Chi kung is the art of energy management, and the form is just a tool or means to implement energy management. If you merely perform chi kung form, you are only

doing physical exercise. If you wish to learn energy management, you have to learn from a master or at least a competent instructor, not just from webpages, videos or books.

4. Turning Head

If you think that this exercise is just for loosening your neck muscles, you are thinking of it as a physical exercise. As a chi kung exercise, it is used literally to cleanse your head and nervous system. Of course you have to learn such advanced skills from a chi kung master, not from a physical education instructor.

5. Thrust Punch

Besides developing powerful punches for martial art, this exercise massages and strengthens your heart. Correct breathing and making the appropriate sound are necessary for obtaining the desired effect.

6. Merry-go-Round

If you wish to revitalize yourself without having to take pep pills, this chi kung exercise may help you. It stimulates your "water" energy at your ming-men, or "gate of life".

7. Carrying the Moon

Many of my students love this exercise the best. It makes you look and feel young, and enhances your nervous system. You can have these benefits only if you can generate a shower of chi or vital energy down your body with this exercise.

8. Nourishing Kidneys

Ask a typical western doctor, and he will tell you that your kidneys have nothing to do with sex. Ask a Chinese physician, and he will tell you that your kidneys have everything to do with sex. In fact, the Chinese medical term generally used to describe sickness related to sex is shen-kui which means "kidney injury". "Why were the Shaolin monks interested in sex?" you may ask. No, the Shaolin monks did this exercise not because of sex, but because "Nourishing Kidneys" also enhances their intellectual and general vitality.

9. Three Levels to Ground

As a physical exercise, "Three Levels to Ground" can make your legs strong and flexible; as a chi kung exercise, it can strengthen your heart system, generate better energy flow, and increase your vitality.

10. Dancing Crane

This exercise helps you to channel vital energy to your legs. But the benefits are not just for the legs. As the body is interconnected by countless meridians, inducing better energy flow at the legs is sometimes necessary to solve problems in other parts of the body. Someone with kidney stones or a dull intellect may overcome his problem more efficiently if he incorporates this "Dancing Crane" exercise.

11. Carrying Mountains

If you wish to have powerful arms but do not want to undergo tough and rough conditioning, or if you wish to overcome some chronic pain at your back, "Carrying Mountain" is a useful exercise.

12. Drawing Knife

"Qi jing ba mai" or the "eight wondrous meridians" is often mentioned in chi kung texts but seldom understood. "Drawing Knife" is an effective exercise to generate energy flow to these eight wondrous meridians.

13. Presenting Claws

If you suffered from diabetes, had trouble with your digestive system, or often felt worried and anxious, this exercise may overcome your problem.

14. Pushing Mountains

I have never failed to be amazed by the profundity in simplify of this exercise. If you wish to overcome your rheumatism, or to enhance your sex life, or to have internal force for martial art, or to have mental freshness -- just to mention a few of its benefits -- practice this exercise.

15. Separating Water

This is an excellent exercise for the heart and the lung systems. It will also give you powerful arms.

16. Big Windmill

Many people will find it hard to believe, but if you perform this exercise correctly and sufficiently, you can develop enough internal force to break a brick without having to lift weights or strike sandbags. Those with diabetes or problems related to the liver and spleen systems will also find this exercise very useful.

17. Deep Knee Bending

Here is another excellent exercise for the lower body. It also opens up the meridians at the legs so that negative energy from other parts of the body can be efficiently drained out into the ground.

18. Rotating Knees

You may be surprised, but "Rotating Knees" may help to overcome sex problems, or enhance sexual performance and enjoyment. Strong, healthy knees, obviously, ensures that you will still be agile at eighty and beyond.



(三) 摘星换斗

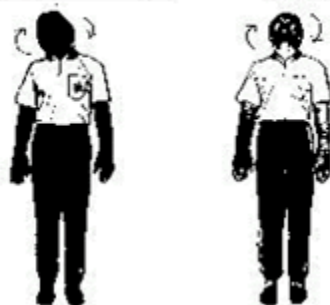
腹舒呼吸 三吸一呼



3. Plucking Stars

轱辘旋转

5 CIRCULATING HEAD



4. Turning Head



5. Thrust Punch

大转乾坤

5 CIRCULATING BODY



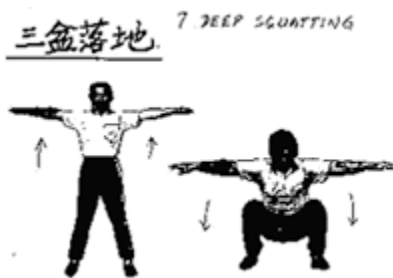
6. Merry-go-Round



7. Carrying the Moon



8. Nourishing Kidneys



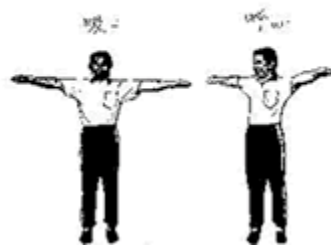
9. Three Levels to Ground



10. Dancing Crane

(十一) 二郎担山

呼吸呼吸



11. Carrying Mountains



12. Drawing Knife



13. Presenting Claws

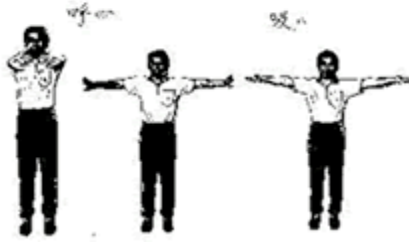
猛虎推山 3 PUSHING MOUNTAINS



14. Pushing Mountains

(十五) 青龙分水

胸背呼吸



15. Separating Water

大风车手 6 CIRCULATING ARM



16. Big Windmill

(十七) 起蹲下坐

腹前呼吸



17. Deep Knee Bending

仙鹤转膝 8 CIRCULATING KNEES



18. Rotating Knees

