



# Jing Luo (Channels and Collaterals | Meridians and Sub-Meridians)

Jing Luo are the main channels of communication and energy distribution in the body.

Link interior Zang Fu organs with various tissues of superficial areas of the body. In this way they allow for internal adaptation to external change.

They connect different superficial areas of the body.

The Jing Luo are more external (and more Yang) than the Zang Fu Organs. When pathogens penetrate the body from the Exterior, they usually penetrate the superficial channels and then the main channels and finally the Zang Fu Organs.

Jing Luo cover the entire body.

Every part of the musculoskeletal system is related to a main meridian and its associated sub-meridians.

Via the main channel, every part of the body associated with a given internal Organ can be affected by imbalance in that Organ.

Example: The Bladder channel: connects the small toe, lateral aspect of foot and ankle, posterior aspect of leg, buttocks, sacroiliac and dorsal region, occiput, vertex, central frontal region and inner canthus of eye.

Knowing the pathway of the channels, we can make connections in symptoms as diverse as itchy eyes, occipital headaches, lumbar pain and spasms in the gastrocnemius. For example, the Heart channel begins in the axilla and ends on the small finger. It has long been noted in western biomedicine that in the case of myocardial infarction, the pain often travels along this channel. TCM provides a link between this external muscular pain and an imbalance in the associated internal Organ.

## Distribution of the Jing Luo

Most superficial: Cutaneous Regions

Deeper	Tendinomuscular Meridians in the musculature	Province of Wei energy 1st line of defense and adaptation
Deeper	Luo Meridians	Associated with Main channels but are more superficial. Link Yin and Yang coupled pairs. Link Primary Meridians with surrounding tissues.
Deeper	Divergent Meridians	Reinforce the circulatory network of 12 Primary Meridians. Provide more functional contacts between Yin and Yang channels.
Deeper	12 Primary Meridians	Connect with Zang Fu Organs. Carry mainly Ying (Nutritive Qi) and Blood.
	8 Extra Vessels	CV GV and Chong Mai originate in Kidney Organ. The others connect with Principal channels.

Function: strengthen association between channels and control, store and regulate Qi and blood of channels (reservoirs). Carry mainly Yuan Qi.

The sub-meridian system (superficial channels) has the main functions of maintaining normal function providing for adaptation to changes in the external environment. This adaptation can often occur without the circulation of Qi in the main Meridians being too affected.

There is much disagreement regarding the pathways of the Luo and Tendinomuscular channels. In any case, these channels do not have their own points but share points of the Primary Meridians. The flow of Qi through these channels is affected by needling points on the Principal channels.

## The Channels of Acupuncture

In Chinese acupuncture anatomy, the internal organs of the body are all interconnected with one another by pathways called meridians, which are located throughout the body. The concept of these pathways could be compared with Western ideas of the blood vessels and capillaries, or the nervous system with its centers and peripheral branches. This system is not, however, the same as either of these other systems. The meridians, unlike the blood vessels, which can be seen with the naked eye, are not visible. As the blood vessels function as pathways for the blood, so the meridians are pathways in which energy is circulated throughout the body.

The meridians spread out through the entire body connecting all the tissues and organs of the body binding it together as an organic unit. They regulate normal functioning of the body, and diagnostically reflect pathology or illness. Meridians are also referred to as Vessels, Chings, or Channels.

In acupuncture we generally consider that there are 72 channels of therapeutic importance:

- 12 Primary Meridians**
- 12 Tendinomuscular Meridians**
- 12 Transversal Lo Vessels**
- 12 Longitudinal Lo Vessels**
- 12 Distinct (Divergent) Meridians**
- 8 Extra (Ancestral) Vessels**
- 3 Extra Longitudinal Lo Vessels**
- 1 Huato Channel**

The most important and essential ones for the circulation of Qi, and for most therapeutic applications are the twelve Primary Meridians and two of the Extra Vessels. The twelve Primary Meridians are also known as the twelve Chings.

The two extra Meridians are the Governing or Du Vessel (DU), and the Conception or Ren Vessel (REN). (The term Conception Vessel does not imply that this Vessel is exclusively concerned with the female, although it does have extensive connections with the female reproductive system, and is frequently used in the treatment of gynecological disturbances. It is, however, present in both male and female).

These two Extra Vessels are usually included in a listing of the twelve Meridians, because of their importance in the circulation of energy, and their value in many treatment formularies. They also have their own acupuncture points.

Some of the meridians of the body run in a more or less horizontal direction, while others run vertically. The twelve Primary Meridians are vertical channels.

The twelve Primary Meridians are also bilateral. This means they have symmetrical pathways on either side of the body in relation to the median (mid-line) of the body, just as we have a right and a left side. There is a Lung meridian on both the left side of the body and the right side of the body, and similarly with all of the other eleven Meridians. The acupuncture points for the various Meridians are in the same mirror image locations on either side of the body.

### Summary

We have 12 bilateral Meridians. The two special vessels (the Conception Vessel and the Governor Vessel) are not bilateral. They are singular channels, which follow the midline of the body, one in front and one on the back. The following pages are diagrams of the locations of the meridians on the human body.

There are a number of ways in which the Primary Meridians can be classified. One method is to classify them into two groups, according to their polarity of Yin and Yang. The Chinese determined that some of the Meridians are predominantly of Yin energy, and some are predominantly of Yang energy.

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<b>Yin Channels (Organ)</b>	<b>Yang Channels (Organ)</b>
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<u>Lung</u> (LU)	<u>Large Intestine</u> (LI)
<u>Spleen</u> (SP)	<u>Stomach</u> (ST)
<u>Heart</u> (HT)	<u>Small Intestine</u> (SI)
<u>Kidneys</u> (KI)	<u>Bladder</u> (BL)
<u>Pericardium</u> (PC)	<u>San Jiao</u> (SJ)
<u>Liver</u> (LV)	<u>Gall Bladder</u> (GB)

The Primary Meridians are also grouped together in coupled pairs, each Yin meridian being coupled to a specific Yang meridian. The pairs are coupled according to the table above, i.e., Lung with Large Intestine, Spleen with Stomach, Heart with Small Intestine, Kidneys with Bladder, Pericardium with San Jiao, and Liver with Gall Bladder.

Another way of classifying the Meridians is based on the main location of the Channel and its terminal point. Six Meridians are located on the upper portion of the body, and start or end on the fingers. The other six Meridians are located on the lower portion of the body and end or start at the toes. Which gives us the following relationships:

Hand Meridians	Foot Meridians
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<u>Lung</u> (LU)	<u>Stomach</u> (ST)
<u>Large Intestine</u> (LI)	<u>Spleen</u> (SP)
<u>Heart</u> (HT)	<u>Bladder</u> (BL)
<u>Small Intestine</u> (SI)	<u>Kidneys</u> (KI)
<u>Pericardium</u> (PC)	<u>Gall Bladder</u> (GB)
<u>San Jiao</u> (SJ)	<u>Liver</u> (LV)

By combining the Yin/Yang and Hand/Foot classifications or groupings, we get the following

Abbreviations	Pathway
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3 Yin Meridians of the Hand	(LU, HT, PC)	Chest to Hand
3 Yang Meridians of the Hand	(LI, SI, SJ)	Hand to Face
3 Yang Meridians of the Foot	(ST, BL, GB)	Face to Foot
3 Yin Meridians of the Foot	(SP, KI, LV)	Foot to Chest

As you can see, so far, the Meridians have been classified into a division of two groups according to Yin and Yang, hand and foot, and as coupled pairs. We are going to classify the Meridians according to the traditional Chinese idea of the cycle of Qi within the Meridians.

The Chinese determined that the energy flows from one meridian to the next in a continuous and fixed order. It flows from meridian to meridian in a two-hour cycle, making the complete circuit once a day.

This cycle is known as the Horary cycle. As the Qi makes its way through the meridians, each meridian in turn, with its associated organ, has a two-hour period during which it is at maximum energy. The Horary Effect is recognizable by measurable increases of Qi within an organ system and meridian during its time of maximum energy. (Qi is, of course, present within every organ system all the time; its level simply fluctuates according to the Horary Cycle.)

If a person moves from one time zone to another, the resultant "jet lag" is a result of the biological Horary clock adjusting to the new time frame. Moving East or West causes this phenomena, but moving due North or South has no effect on the internal clock.

Just as each organ system has a waxing and waning two hour period of maximum energy on the Horary Cycle, there is also the minimum energy effect of the organ on the opposite, side of the cycle, 12 hours apart. An example of this is that while the Lungs have maximum energy from 3-5 AM, the Bladder on the opposite side of the table is at its minimum energy level, 3-5 PM. Qi begins entering the Lungs at 3 AM, and has reached its maximum concentration in the organ at 4 AM. By 5 AM it has done its tonification and repair work and is moving into the Large Intestine channel.

Knowledge of this cycle and its energetic effects is necessary for highly effective acupuncture treatments, as the various organs respond either very well or very little to acupuncture depending on their energetic state at the time of treatment. The Horary Cycle is an excellent diagnostic tool and will be dealt with on the diagnostic level later in this course work.

The flow of energy begins with the Meridian of the Lungs and completes its cycle with the Liver, to commence again at the Lungs, continuing the daily cycle throughout an individual's life span. The reason that the Chinese say that the flow begins with the Lungs, is that they consider the first independent function of a child at birth to be its first breath.

#### Circulation of Energy Through the Primary Meridians

##### The Classical Order of Meridians

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Lungs	3 AM to 5 AM
Large Intestine	5 AM to 7 AM
Stomach	7 AM to 9 AM
Spleen	9 AM to 11 AM
Heart	11 AM to 1 PM
Small Intestine	1 PM to 3 PM
Bladder	3 PM to 5 PM
Kidney	5 PM to 7 PM
Pericardium	7 PM to 9 PM
San Jiao	9 PM to 11 PM
Gall Bladder	11 PM to 1 AM
Liver	1 AM to 3 AM

As you can see in the table of Classical Order of Meridians, the energy flows from one Channel to its coupled pair, and then on to the next coupled pair. The following is a diagram showing the order of energy circulation through the meridians.

#### The Twelve Meridians - In Classical Arrangement

1. Hand Yin Lung Meridian (LU)
2. Hand Yang Large Intestine Meridian (LI)
3. Foot Yang Stomach Meridian (ST)
4. Foot Yin Spleen Meridian (SP)
5. Hand Yin Heart Meridian (HT)
6. Hand Yang Small Intestine Meridian (SI)
7. Foot Yang bladder Meridian (BL)
8. Foot Yin Kidney Meridian (KI)
9. Hand Yin Pericardium Meridian (PC)
10. Hand Yang San Jiao Meridian (SJ)
11. Foot Yang Gall Bladder Meridian (GB)
12. Foot Yin Liver Meridian (LV)
13. The Governing Vessel (DU), also called the Du Mai, or Du Channel
14. The Conception Vessel (REN), also called the Ren Mai, or Ren Channel

A Yin meridian joins its Yang coupled meridian (and vice versa) in the extremities, either the fingers or the toes. Yin meridians of the Hand terminate in the fingers. Yang meridians of the Hand begin in the fingers. Yang meridians of the foot terminate in the toes. Yin meridians of the foot begin in the toes.

**Note:**

Although the Governing Vessel is of Yang nature and the Conception Vessel of Yin nature, these two are not, strictly speaking, a coupled pair in the same sense of the twelve Primary Meridians. The difference lies in the fact that the coupled pairs of P.M.s have specific channels of communication, which join them together. These are the Transversal Lo vessels. The Conception and Governor Vessels do not have Transversal Lo vessels, but rather connect all the Yin channels (Conception Vessel) or Yang Channels (Governor Vessel) respectively.

Each Principal Meridian has its own Transversal Lo vessel. These are actually crosswise connecting channels, known as anastomoses. Since each Principal Meridian has one Transversal Lo, each coupled pair of P.M.s is linked by two of these. (The one exception is the Heart channel, which is linked to the Small Intestine by only one Transversal Lo vessel. We could consider the Transversal Lo vessels as the horizontal or transversal pathways of the Meridians.

Understanding the energetic function of the Meridians is the Chinese equivalent of understanding the function of the organs in Western Medical thought. The meridians are connected with, and have their origin in, the internal organs: treating a meridian effects the organ to which it is connected. The acupuncturist manipulates the vital organs with needles utilizing the acupuncture points along the meridians to achieve the desired effect.

The practice of acupuncture rests upon the relationship that exists between a specific area on the surface of the skin and a particular organ or energetic function. The needles or stimulus acts directly on the meridian, which in turn affects the associated organ. The more appropriate the selection of the points on the meridian, the better the treatment results. Within the 12 Meridians and the two Extra Vessels lie the majority of acupuncture treatment technique.

The series of acupuncture points upon the skin, which constitute the outward line of the meridian, are primary evidence of the meridians existence although the meridians themselves are invisible. Acupuncture point locators indicate the difference in electrical resistance that exists around acupuncture points. The traditional methods of locating the points are by locating specific anatomical landmarks, using special methods of measurement which are valid for any human body, and by finger sensitivity. Finger sensitivity is necessary in many areas of acupuncture practice; locating the points, feeling the quality of the pulses, feeling the grip that Qi is exerting on an inserted needle, feeling (palpating) for sensitized areas of damage on the body.

The meridians provide communication lines between external body appendages and surfaces and the internal organs; upper and lower parts of the body; and provide for the circulation of energy. They govern the body's ability to function, carry Qi, and so contribute largely in the maintenance of health. This energy can be manipulated at stations along these communication lines, the acupuncture points along the meridians.

## General Pathways of the Meridians

The circulating pathways of the twelve Meridians flow from the face to the feet, from the feet to the chest, from the chest into the hands, and from the hands back to the face. The Yang Meridians generally flow along the outward (lateral) side of the limbs and along the back of the body. The Yin Meridians pass along the inward (medial) side of the limbs and along the front of the body. It has already been mentioned that the pathways leading to or from the arms are called Hand Meridians, and those that descend to the legs or ascend from the legs are the Foot Meridians.

The three Yin hand meridians travel from chest to hand; the three Yang hand meridians, from hand to head (face). The three Yang foot meridians travel from head to foot; and the three Yin foot meridians travel from foot to chest. This describes the circulation of energy over the entire body and delineates the pathways in which Qi, or energy, flows.

With the arms raised over the head palms facing forward, the energy in the three Yin Hand Meridians (Lung, Heart, and Pericardium) will be flowing from the chest to the fingertips, upward along the forward portion of the arm. The energy in the three Yang Hand Meridians (Large Intestine, Small Intestine, and the San Jiao) will be flowing from the fingertips, downward on the back part of the arm, to end their flow in the face.

From the head, the energy of TWO of the three Meridians of the Foot (the Bladder and Gall Bladder, but not the Stomach) will be traveling down along the side or back of the body and outward side of the leg to end in the toes. To complete the cycle, the energy in the three Yin Meridians of the Foot (Spleen, Liver and Kidney) will be traveling up from the toes along the inward side of the leg, continuing along the front of the abdomen and ending in the chest, at which point the cycle begins again from the chest to the hand. There are exceptions to this, but the general pattern is accurate.

The Stomach Channel is one exception. Although it is a Yang Meridian, it runs on the front of the body with the Yin Meridians, instead of up the back like the rest of the Yang Meridians. The other exception is the Governor Vessel, which is a Yang Meridian in the center of the back, in which energy flows upward as opposed to the rest of the major Yang Meridians in which energy flows downward.

The Governor Vessel, or Du Mai (Du or GV), follows the spine upward on the back, travels over the head and ends on the inner surface of the upper lip. It has no direct connections to any internal organ. Its energy flow is Yang and ascends from the bottom of the pathway beginning near the anus. It connects with all the Yang Meridians of the body, and is important in many conditions requiring manipulation of the Yang energy of the body.

The Conception Vessel, or Ren Mai (CV or Ren) travels up the midline in front of the body. It runs from near the anus to the mouth, and its energy is Yin, ascending from the lower body to the upper, as does the Governing Vessel. In effect, these two meridians vertically encircle the body on its midline, front and back.

These two Vessels are not bilateral. They do not form a direct part of the organ meridian's energy circulation network, nor are they associated with any one organ. They belong to the eight Extra Vessels.



The energy traveling from the chest to the fingertip is predominantly Yin energy. Yet on its way back up the other side of the arm, it becomes Yang energy. The energy changes polarity, from Yin to Yang, or from Yang to Yin, the nearer it approaches the extremities of the limbs.

The energy traveling from the chest to the fingertip begins as predominantly Yin energy, but as the energy approaches the extremity the polarity begins to change, and by the time the tip of the finger is reached the Yin becomes progressively mixed with the Yang energy. Energy traveling from the fingertips to the face begins as mixed Yin/Yang, but by the time it arrives in the face it is predominantly Yang energy.

Energy traveling from the face to the toes begins as predominantly Yang energy. As this Yang energy approaches the lower extremities of the leg, the polarity begins to change again. By the time the toes are reached the Yang energy is mixed with the Yin energy in almost equal proportions. The return from the toes to the chest causes the transformation again. This Yin energy then flows back into the arm, to continue the cycle.

It can be seen, therefore, that as Qi circulates through the Primary Meridians, it alternates in coupled pairs of Yin and Yang Meridians, staying for two hours in the Yin and two hours in the Yang, in a smooth alternating rhythm.

In the central area of the head and chest, even though the energy passes from one Channel to another, there is no polarity change. The head is the area where one Yang meridian joins another Yang meridian, and the chest is where each Yin meridian joins another.

The polarity change is not a sudden thing, but occurs gradually, mostly between the elbow and the fingertips, and between the knee and the toes. Therapeutically, it is at points below the knee and below the elbow that energy polarity changes can be most easily accelerated or retarded. Within these limits, the most important control or energy manipulation acupuncture points are found.

On acupuncture charts, the meridians appear as thin surface lines connecting a series of dots that represent the acupuncture points. Actually, there is much more to each meridian than what is shown in the acupuncture charts and diagrams. Every Channel has an inner pathway and an outer pathway, and it is usually the outer pathway with its acupuncture points that is shown on most charts or drawings, and the inner pathways are not accessible to manipulation by needling.

The true extent of the Meridians cannot be shown by lines on a two-dimensional drawing. On a drawing the lines show us an imaginary line from point to point, which usually represents the approximate centerline of the sphere of influence of that Channel. According to the Chinese, each Channel is connected to all the tissues, organs and functions over which its acupuncture points have an influence or produce an effect, whether in the immediate area of the points or at a much distant area.

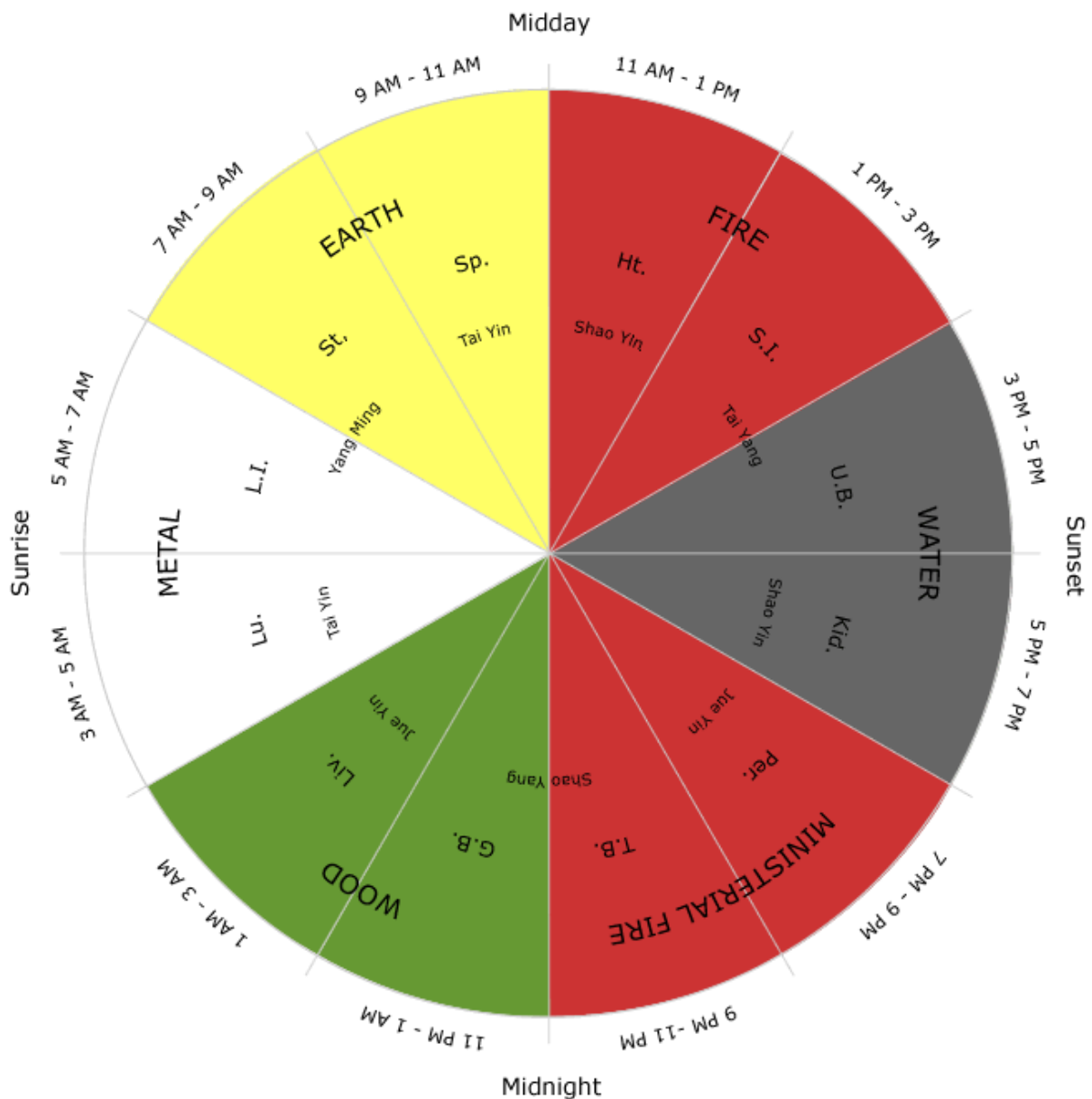
For example:

Examine the Heart Meridian with its nine acupuncture points running from the armpit down the inner surface of the arm to the tip of the little finger, very close to the surface. This much is shown on standard Meridian charts and most diagrams. However, the Heart Meridian naturally must be connected to the Heart, so it extends internally from the armpit point to the organ of the Heart itself. But, the Heart Meridian also has several other

branches deep inside the body. One runs to the Small Intestine, and another branch connects to the head, specifically with the eye, tongue and brain.

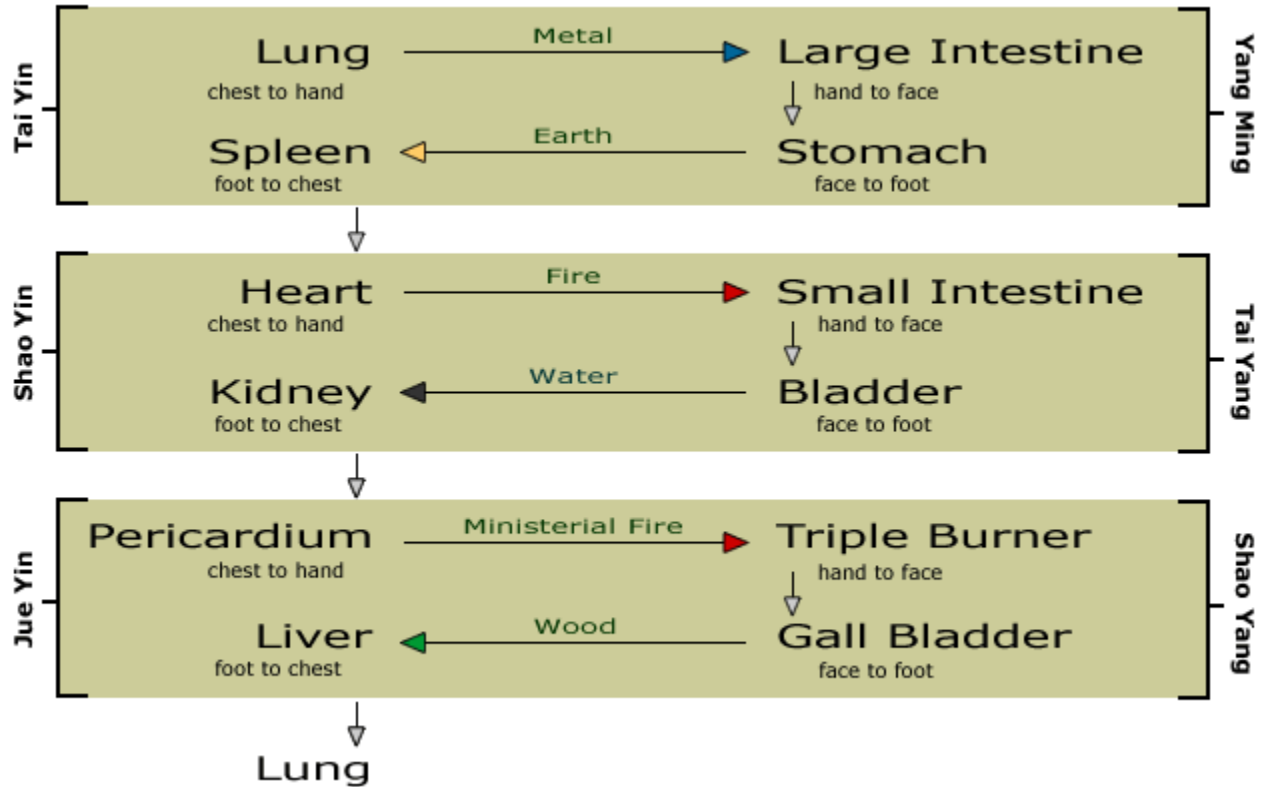
## 24 Hour Qi Flow Cycle

This cycle is known as the Horary cycle. As the Qi makes its way through the meridians, each meridian in turn, with its associated organ, has a two-hour period during which it is at maximum energy. The Horary Effect is recognizable by measurable increases of Qi within an organ system and meridian during its time of maximum energy.



## Three Main Circuits in the Flow of Qi

Qi and blood flow through the channels by way of the Luo (Connecting) points in the order depicted by the green and red arrows in the following diagram.



This cycle can be also be viewed according to the times of the day when Qi is most active in a particular channel, which is known as the [Horary Cycle](#).

## Yin-Qi & Yang-Qi Give Birth to the Five Elements:

According to [Taoist cosmology](#), Yin-Qi and Yang-Qi – the primordial feminine and masculine energies – produce what are known as the “Five Elements.” The Five Elements, in turn, give birth to the “ten-thousand things,” i.e. all of manifest existence. The Five Elements are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water.

## **The Five Elements are Fluid Categories:**

To understand the use of the Five Element system in Qigong, Chinese Medicine and other Taoist practices, it's important to know that the elements – like Yin and Yang – are fluid rather than static categories. For this reason, they're often referred to as the "Five Phases" or "Five Transformations" or even "Five Orbs" (of influence).

## **The Five Elements Support and Control Each Other:**

Everything we find in our external or internal terrain belongs to one of the Five Elements, each of which has supporting and controlling relationships with the other elements. When the Five Elements – within our bodies or external environments – are balanced, we experience health and prosperity. When they're out of balance – overacting, counteracting, or failing to properly support one another – we experience dis-ease of one sort or another.

## **Wood Element Correspondences:**

Yin Organ: Liver  
Yang Organ: Gallbladder  
Season: Spring  
Color: Green  
Flavor: Sour  
Sense Organ: Eyes  
Tissue: Tendons  
Odor: Rancid  
Direction: East  
Emotion: Anger  
Virtue: Kindness  
Planet: Jupiter  
Sound: Shouting  
Musical Note: mi  
Heaven Stems: Jia & Yi  
Environment: Wind  
Domestic Animal: Goat/Sheep  
Developmental Stage: Birth

## **Fire Element Correspondences:**

Yin Organ: Heart/Pericardium  
Yang Organ: Small Intestine/Triple Burner  
Season: Summer  
Color: Red  
Flavor: Bitter  
Sense Organ: Tongue  
Tissue: Vessels  
Odor: Scorched

Direction: South  
Emotion: Anxiety  
Virtue: Joy  
Planet: Mars  
Sound: Laughing  
Musical Note: sol  
Heaven Stems: Bing & Ding  
Environment: Heat  
Domestic Animal: Chicken  
Developmental Stage: Growth

## **Earth Element Correspondences:**

Yin Organ: Spleen  
Yang Organ: Stomach  
Season: Late Summer  
Color: Yellow  
Flavor: Sweet  
Sense Organ: Mouth  
Tissue: Flesh/Muscle  
Odor: Fragrant  
Direction: Center  
Emotion: Worry/Pensiveness  
Virtue: Equanimity  
Planet: Saturn  
Sound: Singing  
Musical Note: do  
Heaven Stems: Wu & Ji  
Environment: Dampness  
Domestic Animal: Ox  
Developmental Stage: Transformation

## **Metal Element Correspondences:**

Yin Organ: Lung  
Yang Organ: Large Intestine  
Season: Autumn  
Color: White  
Flavor: Pungent  
Sense Organ: Nose  
Tissue: Skin  
Odor: Rotten  
Direction: West  
Emotion: Grief/Sadness  
Virtue: Courage  
Planet: Venus  
Sound: Crying  
Musical Note: re

Heaven Stems: Gen & Xin  
Environment: Dryness  
Domestic Animal: Dog  
Developmental Stage: Harvest

## **Water Element Correspondences:**

Yin Organ: Kidney  
Yang Organ: Urinary Bladder  
Season: Winter  
Color: Blue/Black  
Flavor: Salty  
Sense Organ: Ears  
Tissue: Bones  
Odor: Putrid  
Direction: North  
Emotion: Fear  
Virtue: Wisdom/Awe  
Planet: Mercury  
Sound: Groaning  
Musical Note: la  
Heaven Stems: Ren & Gui  
Environment: Cold  
Domestic Animal: Pig  
Developmental Stage: Storage

## **Uses of the Five Element System in Chinese Medicine & Qigong:**

Within the practice of [Chinese Medicine](#), Five-Element [acupuncturists](#) – as their name implies – use the Five-Element system to diagnose and treat their patients. Chinese herbalists are more likely to make use of an Eight Principles diagnostic framework, though [Chinese herbal medicine](#) does rely heavily on the Five-Element “tastes” (sour, salty, bitter, pungent & sweet) – since it is the taste, along with the temperature, of an herb which determines its action within the body.

The Five Element system shows up in various ways within qigong practice. One simple, powerful practice is to direct our attention (using the ["Inner Smile"](#) technique) into the yin organs, in a sequence which follows the Five-Element supporting cycle: Kidney to Liver to Heart to Spleen to Lung, then back to Kidney again. Just becoming familiar with the Five Element Correspondences is a great way to enter into this terrain, and – with time – your intuition will reveal all kinds of ways to benefit from this perceptual framework.

## What Are The Three Treasures?

The Three Treasures -- Jing, Qi and Shen – are substances/energies that we cultivate in qigong and [Inner Alchemy](#) practice. Though there is no exact English translation for Jing, Qi and Shen, they are often translated as Essence, Vitality and Spirit. The qigong practitioner learns to transform Jing into Qi into Shen – the so-called “path of transmutation” – and also to transform Shen into Qi into Jing – the “path of generation” or “path of manifestation.” The Three Treasures can be thought of also as three different frequencies, or as existing along a continuum of frequency. Practitioners of Inner Alchemy learn to modulate their consciousness along this vibratory spectrum – choosing their frequency in much the same way we might choose a specific radio station to tune into.

### Jing

The most concentrated or densely-vibrating energy is Jing. Of the Three Treasures, Jing is the one associated most closely with our physical body. The home of Jing is the lower dantian, or the Kidney Organ System, and it includes the reproductive energy of the sperm and ova. Jing is considered to be the root of our Vitality, the physical substance out of which our life unfolds. The modern-day herbalist Ron Teeguarden tells the story of how his teacher – Master Sung Jin Park – likened Jing to the wax and wick of a candle. It can also be thought of as being similar to the hardware and software of a computer – the physical basis for a functioning system. Jing is lost through excessive stress or worry. It is also depleted, in men, via excessive sexual activity (that includes ejaculation), and in women via abnormally heavy menstruation. Jing can be restored through dietary and herbal supplements, as well as through qigong practice.

### Qi

[Qi](#) – life-force energy – is that which animates our bodies, which allows movement of all sorts: the movement of breath in and out of our lungs, the movement of blood through the vessels, the functioning of the various Organ Systems, etc. The home of Qi is the middle dantian, and it is associated in particular with the Liver and Spleen Organ Systems. If Jing is the wax and wick of a candle, then Qi is the candle flame – the energy produced via the transformation of the physical base. If Jing is your computer’s hardware and software, then Qi is the electricity that allows the system to “turn on,” to actually function as a computer.

### Shen

The third of the Three Treasures is Shen, which is our Spirit or Mind (in its largest sense). The home of Shen is the upper dantian, and it is associated with the Heart Organ System. Shen is the spiritual radiance that can be seen shining through a person’s eyes – the emanation of a universal loving-kindness, compassion, and enlightened power; of a heart brimming with wisdom, forgiveness and generosity. If Jing is the wax and wick of a candle, and Qi its flame, then Shen is the radiance given off by the flame – what allows it to actually be a source of light. And in the same way that the light from a candle depends upon the wax, wick and flame, so does healthy Shen depend upon the cultivation of Jing and Qi. It is only through the temple of a strong and balanced body that a radiant Spirit can shine.

## How To Practice The "Inner Smile"

By Elizabeth Reninger

One of the most well-known of Taoist neidan ([Inner Alchemy](#)) practices is the "Inner Smile" - in which we smile inwardly to each of the major organs of our body, activating within us the energy of loving-kindness, and waking up the Five-Element associational network. Here we will learn a variation on this classic practice, which allows us to direct the healing energy of a smile into any part of our body that we would like ...

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Time Required:** 10 - 30 minutes, or longer if you'd like

### Here's How:

1. Sit comfortably, either on a straight-backed chair, or on the floor. The important thing is for your spine to be in an upright position, and your head arranged to allow the muscles of your neck and throat to feel relaxed.
2. Take a couple of deep, slow breaths, noticing how your abdomen rises with each inhalation, then relaxes back toward your spine with each exhalation. Let go of thoughts of past or future.
3. Rest the tip of your tongue gently on the roof of your mouth, somewhere behind, and close to, your upper front teeth. You'll find the spot that feels perfect.
4. Smile gently, allowing your lips to feel full and smooth as they spread to the side and lift just slightly. This smile should be kind of like the Mona Lisa smile, or how we might smile - mostly to ourselves - if we had just gotten a joke that someone told us several days ago: nothing too extreme, just the kind of thing that relaxes our entire face and head, and makes us start to feel good inside.
5. Now bring your attention to the space between your eyebrows (the "Third Eye" center). As you rest your attention there, energy will begin to gather. Imagine that place to be like a pool of warm water, and as energy pools there, let your attention drift deeper into that pool - back and toward the center of your head.
6. Let your attention rest now right in the center of your brain - the space equidistant between the tips of your ears. This is a place referred to in Taoism as the Crystal Palace - home to the pineal, pituitary, thalamus and hypothalamus glands. Feel the energy gathering in this powerful place.
7. Allow this energy gathering in the Crystal Palace to flow forward into your eyes. Feel your eyes becoming "smiling eyes." To enhance this, you can imagine that you're gazing into the eyes of the person who you love the most, and they're gazing back at you ... infusing your eyes with this quality of loving-kindness and delight.



8. Now, direct the energy of your smiling eyes back and down into some place in your body that would like some of this healing energy. It might be a place where you've recently had an injury or illness. It might be a place that just feels a little numb or "sleepy," or simply some place you've not recently explored. In any case, smile down into that place within your body, and feel that place opening to receive smile-energy.
9. Continue to smile into that place within your body, for as long as you'd like ... letting it soak up smile-energy like a sponge soaks up water.
10. When this feels complete, direct your inner gaze, with its smile-energy, into your navel center, feeling warmth and brightness gathering now in your lower belly.
11. Release the tip of your tongue from the roof of your mouth and release the smile (or keep it if it now feels natural).

## **Tips:**

1. As with all neidan practices, it's important to find a balance between effort and relaxation. If you notice a build-up of tension, relax, take a couple of deep breaths, then return to the practice. If your mind wanders, simply notice this, and come back to the practice.
2. Remember to maintain the quality of a gentle, genuine smile - infused with the energy of loving-kindness and compassion - particularly when directing your "inner smile" into an injured place. If you notice frustration, anger, fear or judgment creeping in, take a couple of deep breaths, then connect again with loving-kindness and compassion - the energies that can heal us.
3. The Crystal Palace is known also - in Hindu yogic traditions - as the Cave of Brahma.

## 4. **What You Need:**

- A precious human body.
- A straight-backed chair, or floor to sit on.