

## What Is Qi (Chi)?

Qi, also commonly spelled *ch'i* (in Wade-Giles romanization) or *ki* (in romanized Japanese), is a fundamental concept of traditional Chinese culture. Qi is believed to be part of everything that exists, as in "life force" or "spiritual energy." It is most often translated as "energy flow," or literally as "air" or "breath" (for example, a term meaning "weather" *istīānqì*, or the "breath of heaven"). It is pronounced something like "chee" in Mandarin Chinese but the tongue position is different.

The etymological meaning of the qi ideogram in its traditional form 氣 is "steam (气) rising from rice (米) as it cooks."



References to qi, and similar philosophical concepts, as the life-process of "flow" in metaphysical energy that sustains living beings are found in many belief systems, especially in Asia. Philosophical conceptions of qi date from the earliest recorded times in Chinese thinking. One of the important early figures in Chinese mythology is Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor). He is often considered a culture hero who collected and formalized much of what subsequently became known as traditional Chinese medicine.

Although the concept of qi has been very important within many Chinese philosophies, their descriptions of qi have been varied and conflicting. One significant difference has been the question of whether qi exists as a force separate from matter, if qi arises from matter, or if matter arises from qi. Some Buddhists and Taoists have tended toward the third belief, with some Buddhists in particular believing that matter is an illusion.

By contrast, the Neo-Confucians criticized the notion that qi exists separate from matter, and viewed qi as arising from the properties of matter. Most of the theories of qi as a metaphor for the fundamental physical properties of the universe that we are familiar with today were systematized and promulgated in the last thousand years or so by the Neo-Confucians. Knowledge of the theories they espoused was eventually required by subsequent Chinese dynasties to pass their civil service examinations.

### Types of Qi:

#### Yuan Qi

In traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese culture, **yuán qì** (元氣) is a description of one form of qi. It is usually described as "innate" or "pre-natal" qi to distinguish it from acquired qi that a person may develop of their lifetime.

Porkert describes the concept as "the metaphorical designation of the inborn constitution, the vital potential that is gradually used up in the course of life. It may be conserved but never replenished."

The term has been used since at least Yuan dynasty times.

#### Zhong Qi

This is referred to as upright Qi or pectoral Qi.

### **Wei Qi**

This is referred to as defensive Qi.

### **Chi and light**

In Quantum Physics research has demonstrated that everything originates as light (invisible light frequencies)...light is the highest frequency on the spectrum. Light is made up of sub-atomic particles called photons.

The entire spectrum of energy is formed as light vibration slows down and the frequencies we distinguish as gamma, X ray, electromagnetic, sound, and matter etc form. Everything is ultimately constructed from light.

Not only are our body's composed of light, but light is carried around and inside our physical body in meridians (channels). These meridians are a transport system within the body, and access the higher frequency outside our physical body via the acupuncture points.

Light enters our body system via the crown chakra at the top of our head, and flows into our heart. From here it is directed through the body and into the earth beneath our feet. It then flows up the outside of our body, helping to form the subtle bodies, and back to the top. We are actually encased in an egg shaped light cocoon, or donut.

Light enters our meridian system via the chakra system...7 energy vortex which step down and transform the energy into various frequencies which form color...from red at the root chakra, up to ultra violet at the crown chakra. From here it is downloaded to the corresponding organs, and into the meridian system, from where it flows intricately through our body system.

Chi is light energy, and just like electricity, it has two opposite poles...positive and negative (yang and yin) Negative is not bad, just the opposite quality to positive. Yang is the masculine, hot, fiery, bright, vibrant energy, and yin is the feminine, cool, calm, dark, peaceful energy. Yang could be said to equate to function, and yin to structure of the organs.

Yin and Yang equate exactly with the corresponding functions of the autonomic nervous system, parasympathetic and sympathetic functions. The autonomic nervous system is the system which runs all the automatic, unconscious processes within the body, including regulating blood pressure, respiration, heart rate etc These functions can be influenced by manipulation of acupuncture points by use of needling. Balance is the optimum state...where all systems are in harmony, and chi is free flowing.

### **Many Different Kinds of Qi**

Practitioners of Chinese Medicine and qigong have identified many different kinds of qi. Within the human body there is the qi that we're born with, called Yuan qi, or ancestral qi. The qi that we absorb during our lives from food, water, air and qigong practice is called Hou tain qi or post-natal qi. The qi that flows at the surface of the body, as a protective sheath, is called Wei qi or protective qi. Each internal organ also has its own qi/life-force, e.g. Spleen-qi, Lung-qi, Kidney-qi. According to Taoist cosmology, the two most fundamental forms of qi are Yin-qi and Yang-qi -- the primordial feminine and masculine energies. Many qigong practices utilize Heaven qi

and Earth qi, as well as the qi that emanates specifically from trees, flowers, lakes and mountains.

### **Balanced & Free-Flowing Qi = Health**

The fundamental insight of qigong and Chinese Medicine (acupuncture and herbal medicine) is that balanced and free-flowing qi results in health; while stagnant or imbalanced qi leads to disease. This is true not only at the level of the human body, but also in terms of natural landscapes -- mountains, rivers, forests -- and man-made structures -- houses, office-buildings, and parks. In the same way that an acupuncturist diagnoses energetic imbalances, and works to re-establish free-flowing qi in the human body; so does the practitioner of Feng Shui perceive energetic imbalances in natural or man-made landscapes, and then apply various techniques to remedy those imbalances. In both cases, the goal is to establish a more open flow of energy in the particular (internal or external) environment. We can understand Taoist ceremony, also, as being a form of qigong or Feng Shui, since specific actions and arrangements of ritual objects are used to invoke the flow of sacred energy. Like a powerful acupuncture treatment, the successful ritual opens a portal between the human realm and the realms of the spirits, Deities and Immortals.

### **Feeling the Qi**

The capacity to perceive the flow of qi directly -- to actually see or feel it -- is something that can be cultivated through training in qigong or acupuncture. Like any skill, some people are better at it than others: for some it seems to come “naturally,” for others it’s more of a challenge. Even if it’s not consciously cultivated or acknowledged, most of us can tell the difference between someone who has “great energy” and someone from whom we feel a “bad vibe.” And most of us are able to notice, when we enter a room, whether the atmosphere seems relaxed and uplifted, or tense and heavy. To the extent that we notice such things, we are tuning into the level of qi.

We might be in the habit of perceiving our world in terms of solid shapes and forms. What Taoism teaches is that we can train ourselves to perceive in other ways; and a good place to start is with our own human body. Though we may now experience our body as being rather solid, at a molecular level it is comprised mostly of water – a very fluid substance! And at an atomic level it is 99.99% space – a vast (and infinitely intelligent) emptiness.

As we practice qigong and Inner Alchemy, we cultivate the capacity to perceive at all of these different levels – to feel ourselves and our world as fluid, and as spacious; as well as being filled with apparently-solid forms. As we become more adept in this way, we become aware, directly, of the vibratory nature of all-that-is. Not only do we experience our bodies as being comprised of patterns and flows of qi, but also come to understand that “emotions” and “thoughts” are also forms of energy. These insights give rise then to the potential for newly-powerful and deliciously-creative action within this vibrating world.