

Ki Training For Maximum Power

By Jane Hallander, Inside Karate, September 1994

In Chinese its called qi (chi). In Japanese and Korean, the term is ki. It means the same- literally air or breath, specifically inner energy or life force. Some martial arts incorporate ki training and development into their training regimen as a means to generate up to seven times the average person's power with each fighting technique.

You can find ki training from a variety of sources. Some types of Yoga are geared toward ki development. The Chinese practice qigong (chi kung) for health and martial arts purposes. However, not every type of ki training develops martial potential. Some qigong and ki development styles are for health only. Martial art ki development requires a special kind of training that incorporates both fighting and health benefits into one system.

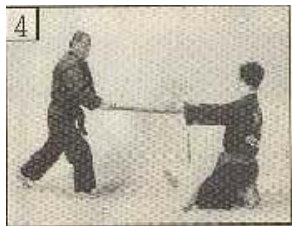
The Korean, martial art kuk sool won places much emphasis on ki development. Like the Chinese internal martial arts — tai chi, hsing-i and ba gua— kuk sool is based on relaxed power. Relaxed power is p without sheer force against force. Kuk sool stylists take control of the opponent by taking him off balance, then deliver a powerful, relaxed blow or joint locking technique to end the fight. Ki power helps them stay relaxed and deliver a more powerful technique.



Kuk sool eighth degree master Jung Oh Lee specialises in ki development and training. Lee, who has been teaching for over 25 years, was one of kuk sool won founder, In Hyuk Suh's, first students in Korea in the 1960s. He now teaches in the San Francisco kuk sool school. He is known throughout kuk sool for his almost mystical ability to use ki in breaking techniques with out any visible force.

According to Lee, "In Korea before martial arts became sport and recreation activities, any serious martial artists practiced ki training besides their external physical practice. Only in modern times is ki training overlooked or thought of as superstition."





Jung Oh Lee demonstrates his control in this sequence (1). His student supports the board (2), Master Lee draws back his wooden sword (3), and breaks it cleanly with one strike (4)

Lee maintains that everyone has their own maximum power potential, exceeding their ability without ki development. By developing their ki power they can reach their maximum power potential whenever needed.

There are two principle types of ki power training in kuk sool. One involves meditation. The other, called ki-cho-iaki (wringing out the ki) is more closely related to martial arts. Both are essential to ki power development.

Although there are many different ways to develop more powerful ki, all must include good breathing practices. There is no ki development without deep, even breathing.

Correct breathing starts with slowing the breathing into long, slow relaxed breaths. Ki development delivers more oxygen to all body cells. The skin has better color and stays younger and elastic longer. Ki development experts do not get sick as often as the average person and recover quicker from any diseases they do contract. In ancient Korea, martial artists with ki power training functioned well throughout continuous three or four day battles with no rest at all.





Often, an attacker does not use a single move, but launches into a flurry of attacks. In this sequence, the attacker menaces the defender (1), The defender parries the attacker's kick (2), and the attacker then attempts a punch, which is also immediately parried (3). The defender finishes him with a palm heel smash to the nose (4).

According to Lee, ki power increases speed and external (muscular) force. Martial artists who do not have ki training in their background do well in their first round of sparring. However, from the second round on, they don't have the stamina of someone with ki training. With ki power, you keep your energy.

Because ki flows more freely throughout the body when both mind and body are relaxed, daily meditation is important. The mind doesn't relax until the body is physically relaxed and vice versa. Quiet, calm breathing helps the body relax and ki flow. Meditation helps slow the breathing and relax tense muscles and mind.

The longer meditation is practiced, the better and more meaningful it becomes. For instance, for those who meditate a half hour at each session, the person who is beginning ki training about 25 minutes to reach a calm state. The student who has done more meditation may take 10 minutes or less to reach the same calm slate. The more practiced person gets 20 minutes or more of useful meditation, while the beginner gets five minutes or less.

Lee explains that some indications of correct ki training are sensory feelings, often experienced during meditation. They include sensations of internal heat, warmth moving down the legs, or an itching skin feeling that makes the fine hairs on arms and legs stand on end.

As the ki flows smoothly, the body becomes warm. As the ki flows out into the hands, the hands get warm. Relaxation is a must, since any tenseness in the shoulders, arms or wrists prevents ki from flowing into the hands. All types of ki training should be pleasant experiences, done without forcing oneself. It is a discipline, but a pleasant one.

Lee has some advice for those who start meditating: “Before ki training you should be neither hungry or full. If hungry, you’ll think about food. If full, you’ll want to sleep.” “Avoid all drafts during ki training, especially during meditation. In a draft the skin pores open, making you susceptible to colds and flu. Do not drink alcohol before ki training. It might put you to sleep and will surely disturb the ki flow. Tobacco smoking is also bad for anyone who practices ki training. It interrupts the breathing, lessens the total lung capacity and greatly restricts the flow of ki throughout the body.





In this sequence, the adversaries square off (1). The attacker kicks, and the defender uses a downward parry (2). He steps down and attempts a punch, the the defender deflects his arm (3), grabs the back of his head while stepping through (4), twists at the waist, sending him head over heels (5), and sends him sprawling (6&7).

The longer the meditation is practiced, the better and more meaningful it becomes.

“It’s easier to develop ki if you are not mentally or physically stressed. Try not to be upset or worried. Even everyday worries can disrupt ki development. Be prepared for meditation to be difficult at first. Don’t make the beginner’s mistake of trying to completely stop thinking. You can’t. The mind is always active. Just relax and practice. After several years of daily practice, you’ll find a big difference in strength and power, Those who think that after only a couple of months they have much more ki power are wrong.”

There are 36 different ki meditation postures in kuk sool won. Twelve of those 36 are basic positions practiced by every student from their first day in kuk sool. The positions among the first 12 are broken down into prone and sitting postures. Lying or prone postures are practiced first, since they are comfortable for novice students.

Prone meditation positions help bring the student’s breathing down lower into their chests and abdomens. Most people breathe high in their chests, using only a third of their total lung capacity. Prone meditation postures help develop full lung capacity.

One of kuk sool's basic prone meditation positions has students laying on their backs with their eyes closed. One hand is resting over the navel, with the other on the body at mid-chest level. Deep abdominal breathing is practiced in this position. Deep abdominal breathing is done by pushing the abdomen out with each breath inhale. This causes the diaphragm to relax allowing air to move into the bottom of the lungs. The abdomen is drawn, in with each breath exhale, forcing carbon dioxide out of the lungs.

Sitting meditation positions are slightly more difficult than the prone postures. The first sitting posture has both hands, palms up, resting on top of the bent knees. This position relaxes the hands and wrists, improving ki flow and blood into the hands.





The attacker and the defender face off (1). The attacker launches into a front kick which is intercepted (2). He then attempts an overhead punch, which the defender blocks with an 'X' (3). The defender pivots (4), grabs the attacker's leg (5), applies pressure (6), and sends him to the floor (7).

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As kuk sool stylists progress in sitting meditation expertise, one hand is left on the knee while the other is held in a vertical position in front of the chest.

In the final sitting position both hands are raised above the head, with the fingers spread and the palms pushing upward. At this point the body is completely relaxed and able to connect the the ki between the fingers and fingertips of one hand with the ki from the other hand. Each meditation position is done for 10 long even breaths with a four to five second interval between inhale and exhale of each breath.





In this striking combination, the adversaries face off (1), and the attacker kicks, only to have his move blocked (2). He steps in with a punch and the defender parries (3), and strikes to the face (4)

Besides meditation, kuk sool won ki power training includes a series of internal exercises called ki-cho-iaki (wringing out the ki). Strictly martial art ki development exercises, ki-cho-jaki brings ki and energy out into the hands and fingers whenever needed.

Ki-cho-jaki are standing exercises that have kuk sool stylists spreading and contracting their fingers, while they inhale and exhale with deep abdominal breathing. First they draw in a lung full of air, pushing ki into the hands. Then they ki-ap (ki-ai), letting out about a third of the inhaled air. The rest of the air is held for seven seconds, then released. It takes approximately seven seconds for ki to make a complete orbit through the body.

Fingers spread apart, staling with the yelled ki-ap, and do not relax until releasing the balance of air. The theory is that opening the fingers connects all 687 pressure points in the body. Not only does ki-cho-jaki help internal ki power, it also physically strengthens the fingers. Ki-cho-jaki is done five minutes a day everyday.

The first ki-cho-jaki exercise starts with a low square stance, hands in fists at the sides — the inhale position. Next comes a ki-ap, extending the hands and opening the fingers wide. After seven seconds, while exhaling the remaining air, hands are brought back to the first position at the practitioner's sides.

A more difficult ki-cho-jaki is practiced from a more upright stance, with legs slightly spread. Hands start with the fingers pointed downward, arms extending out at the same angle as the legs. This is the inhale position. The ki-ap follows as one third of the air is exhaled — raising the hands to chest level the air is exhaled. During seven seconds of holding the remaining air in the lungs, the fingers are opened wide in front of the body. Then, as the balance of air is exhaled, the hands are raised slightly and the fingers closed. Finally the arms drop down to the starting position.

After all this ki power training the results are impressive. Jung Oh Lee claims that ki power graduates can hit or kick something with up to seven times an average person's power. Certainly, a feat with which any martial artist can live.

