

## 8 Pieces of Silk Brocade (Ba Duan Jin)

This 800-1000 year old routine, which the ancients likened to beautiful brocade, consists of eight related exercises, and is very popular among the Chinese people.

One set takes 10-20 minutes to do, depending on the number of repetitions of each exercise, and can [should?] be done daily for maximum benefits.

Each exercise can be practiced on its own, standing or sitting, and each targets a specific organ or health need. The movements and names can vary greatly across different schools of practice, with some variations indicated below.

Adapt the exercises to your own needs, and do not be afraid of making changes as other variations will occur in class practice.

In normal class use we'll start with some form of warmup/breathing exercise, and end with a short relaxing meditation

### **Two Hands Hold up the Sky/Heavens**

This move is said to stimulate the "Triple Burner" aka "Triple Warmer" or "Triple Heater" meridian (Sanjiao). It consists of an upward movement of the hands, which are loosely joined and travel up the centre of the body.

### **Drawing/Pulling the Bow to Shoot the Eagle / Hawk / Vulture**

While in a lower horse stance, the practitioner imitates the action of drawing a bow to either side. It is said to exercise the waist area, focusing on the kidneys and spleen.

### **Crane Spreading its Wing/Separate Heaven and Earth**

This resembles a version of the first piece with the hands pressing in opposite directions, one up and one down. A smooth motion in which the hands switch positions is the main action, and it is said to especially stimulate the stomach. It can also be done with the feet alternating between left and right bow stances.

### **Wise Owl Gazes Backwards/Looking Backward**

This is a stretch of the neck to the left and the right in an alternating fashion while raising the arms.

### **Left and right swing/Sway the Head and Shake the Tail**

This is said to regulate the function of the heart and lungs. Its primary aim is to remove excess heat (or fire) (xin huo) from the heart. Xin huo is also associated with heart fire in traditional Chinese medicine. In performing this piece, the practitioner squats in a low horse stance, places the hands on thighs with the elbows facing out and twists to glance backwards on each side.

Modify/simplify the movement if you have had either hip or knee joint replacements.

### **Up and Down Stretch/Spiralling Lotus/Two Hands Hold the Feet to Strengthen the Kidneys and Waist**

This involves a stretch upwards followed by a forward bend and a holding of the toes.

### **Diagonal Knock/Clench the Fists and Glare Fiercely (or Angrily)**

This resembles the second piece, and is largely a punching movement either to the sides or forward while in horse stance. This, which is the most external of the pieces, is aimed at increasing general vitality and muscular strength.

### **Bouncing on the Toes/Toe and Heel Bounce**

This is a push upward from the toes with a small rocking motion on landing. The gentle shaking vibrations of this piece is said to "smooth out" the qi after practice of the preceding seven pieces or, in some systems, this is more specifically to follow Sway the Head and Shake the Tail.

As always, listen to your body and modify the exercises to fit your needs. Tai chi is "the Art of Relaxation", not should not be painful or lead to injury.