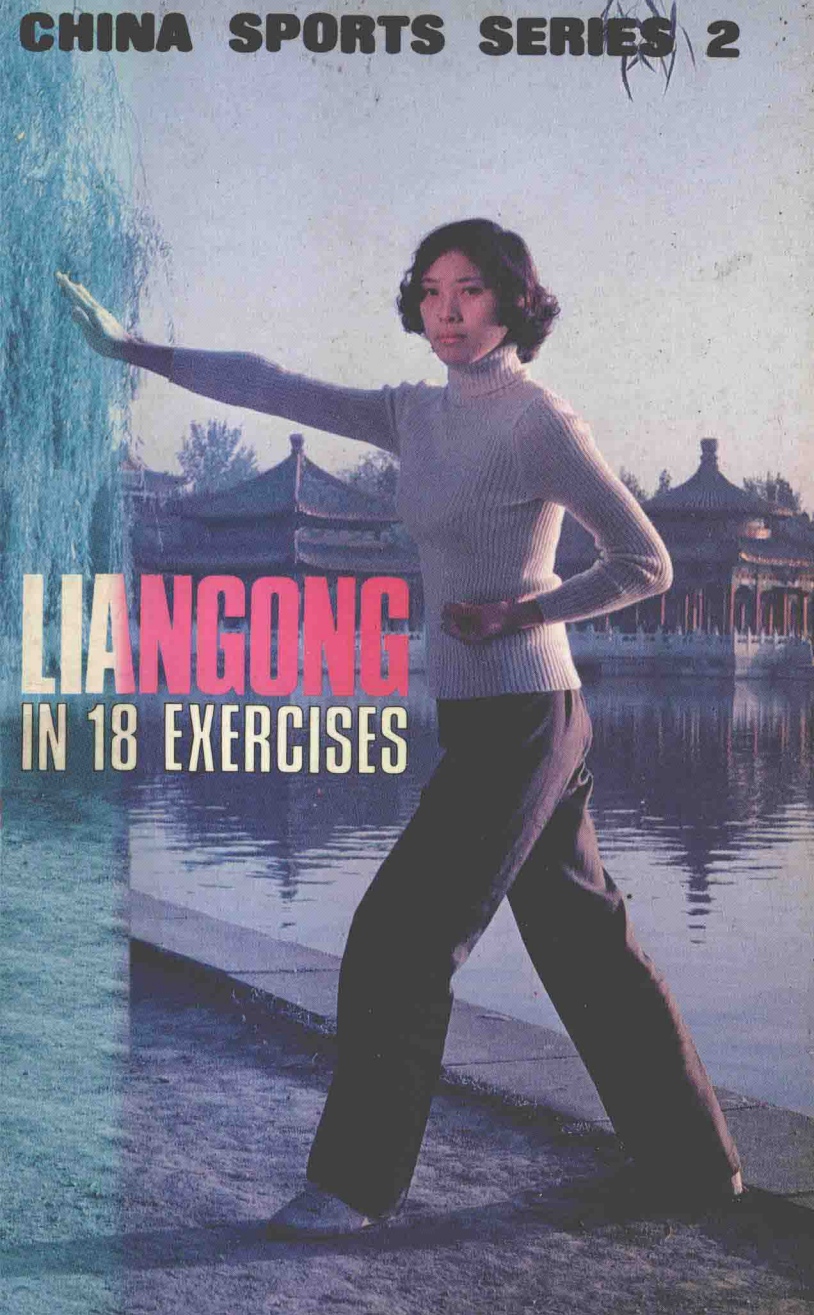


**CHINA SPORTS SERIES 2**

**LIANGONG**  
**IN 18 EXERCISES**



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**CHINA SPORTS SERIES 2**

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# CONTENTS

<b>"Liangong" in 18 Exercises: Why Has It Gained Popularity?</b>	1
<b>"Liangong" in 18 Exercises — Its Features and Effects</b>	6
<b>Points to Remember in Practising "Liangong" in 18 Exercises</b>	10
<b>"Liangong" in 18 Exercises</b>	
<b>Section A Exercises for Preventing and Healing Aching Neck and Shoulders</b>	18
Exercise 1 Turn Neck	18
Exercise 2 Draw a Bow on Both Sides	20
Exercise 3 Stretch Arms	22
Exercise 4 Expand Chest	24
Exercise 5 Spread Wings for Flight	26
Exercise 6 Raise Single Iron Arm	28
<b>Section B Exercises for Preventing and Healing Backache</b>	30
Exercise 1 Support the Sky with Both Hands	30
Exercise 2 Turn Trunk and Push Palm	32
Exercise 3 Circle Pelvis with Arms Akimbo	34

Exercise 4	Stretch Arms and Bend Trunk	36
Exercise 5	Take a "Bow Step" and Thrust Palm	38
Exercise 6	Press Palms on Feet	40
<b>Section C</b>	<b>Exercises for Preventing and Health Aching Buttocks and Legs</b>	42
Exercise 1	Circle Knees	42
Exercise 2	Make Reverse "Bow Step" and Turn Body	44
Exercise 3	Bow, Squat and Stretch Legs	46
Exercise 4	Keep One Palm on Knee and Hold Up the Other	48
Exercise 5	Hold Knee in Front of Chest	50
Exercise 6	"Stroll Through the Impregnable Pass with Firm Strides"	52
<b>Section D</b>	<b>Exercises for Preventing and Healing Aching Joints of Limbs</b>	54
Exercise 1	Sit Astride and Push Palms	54
Exercise 2	Push Palm in "Seated Step"	56
Exercise 3	Limber Up from Top to Bottom	58
Exercise 4	Turn Trunk and Head	60
Exercise 5	Pedal Right and Left	62
Exercise 6	Kick Shuttlecock on All Sides	64
<b>Section E</b>	<b>Exercises for Preventing and Healing Tenosynovitis</b>	66
Exercise 1	Push Palms to Four Directions	66
Exercise 2	Draw a Bow	68

Exercise 3	Stretch Arms and Turn Wrists	70
Exercise 4	Stretch Arms Forward and Backward	72
Exercise 5	Thrust Fists While Sitting Astride	74
Exercise 6	Relax Arms and Turn Trunk	76
<b>Section F</b>	<b>Exercises for Preventing and Healing Functional Disorders of Internal Organs</b>	<b>78</b>
Exercise 1	Rub Face and Knead Acupuncture Points	78
Exercise 2	Massage Chest and Abdomen	80
Exercise 3	Comb Hair and Turn Trunk	82
Exercise 4	Hold Up Palm and Lift Knee	84
Exercise 5	Turn and Bend Trunk	86
Exercise 6	Stretch Arms and Expand Chest	88

## **Appendix**

Persistent Practice Pays Off	92
"Asymmetrical" Face No More	94
"Liangong" in 18 Exercises: A Sure Cure	96

## “Liangong” in 18 Exercises: Why Has It Gained Popularity?

Since the serial publication of “Liangong” in 18 Exercises beginning from October 1980, we have received many letters from readers at home and abroad. Some describe how they have benefited from these exercises practised according to the requirements while others request that the text of these exercises be published in pamphlet form as soon as possible.

Why such popularity? May be it is mainly because “Liangong” is a fairly all-round and systematic set of exercises for keeping body fit and a good method of healing pains in the neck, shoulders, waist and legs. These easy-to-learn exercises suit both the old and the young and, when adequately applied, produce remarkable results. Besides, it has some curative effects on chronic ailments like cardio-vascular diseases and neurasthenia.

Aching neck, shoulders, waist and legs are common ailments known as “strain”. They are caused by chronic damage of the soft tissues resulting from doing the same kind of physical labour over a long period, and from incorrect postures and lack of physical exercises. The basic pathological changes

of such injuries consist of muscular convulsions and broken muscular fibres caused by traction of muscles, ligaments and tendon membrane, followed by the emergence of connective tissues and adhesion, all leading to dysfunction.

Teachers, scientists, technicians, financial and other office workers, for example, are prone to muscular strain in the neck and waist. This is because they always bend their head and neck and waist when reading, writing or calculating in a fixed posture. The same is true of the workers and peasants who work at the bench or in the fields year in and year out, with bent waist, arched back and continuous traction of shoulder joints. Incomplete statistics show that 40 per cent of the textile workers and 60 per cent of the peasants have pains in the neck, shoulders, waist and legs to varying degrees. The saying that "nine out of ten people have lumbago" points to the high incidence of such ailments. Hence it is important of preventing and healing pains in the neck, shoulders, waist and legs.

What are the effects of "Liangong" in 18 Exercises onto the human body, the locomotor systems in particular? First, these exercises stimulate the mechanical contraction of muscles which rid the tissues of possible extravasated blood, loosen the adhesion of soft tissues and improve the function of the joints. It also serves to correct one's posture and figure, readjust the force-bearing structure of each part of the body, increase the flow of blood in



the locomotive organs and speed up the healing of damaged soft tissues. Secondly, they effectively help in building up the physique, for they stimulate metabolism, improve the functions of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems and help regulate the wasting on the brain and increase thinking ability.

Several years ago, the massage department of the Dongchang Road Hospital in the Huangpu District of Shanghai received more than 300 outpatients a day for treatment combining traditional Chinese and Western medicines. Analysis showed that most of them were suffering from pains in the neck, shoulders, waist and legs. Some were victims for more than 10 years with pathological changes such as crooked spine and vertebral overgrowth. Using his unique massage techniques in combination with some exercises on his patients, Dr. Zhuang Yuanming achieved remarkable results. Some patients whose conditions had improved, however, failed to recover completely or had relapses because they did not persist in doing the exercises. From this, Dr. Zhuang and his colleagues deduced that a purely curative approach was one-sided. While continuing to gain experience from clinical practice, they asked: What must be done to improve and consolidate the results of medical treatment and shorten the period of recovery? They agreed that a mass movement should be carried out to help the people prevent and cure pains in the neck, shoulders, waist and legs by acquainting them with the necessary knowledge. Doctor

Zhuang Yuanming, who was an expert in traditional Chinese medicine, worked together with Doctor Zhou Shouxiang, who specialized in Western medicine, and made in-depth study and investigations which led to the conclusion that massage followed by regular exercises produced much better results. They also found that correct or incorrect postures in doing the exercises had a direct bearing on the results. These findings inspired them to work out a series of therapy-oriented exercises. Drawing on the fine points of traditional sports therapy and incorporating the experience gained by the noted practitioner Wang Zhiping (1881-1973), Dr. Zhuang and Dr. Zhou jointly created a fairly comprehensive set of fitness exercises called "Liangong" in 18 Exercises. Combining traditional Chinese and Western methods of medical treatment and incorporating the movements of those exercises which have proved effective in clinical practice, this set of exercises takes into account of the position and nature of different types of muscular strain and the requirements of treating them as elucidated in modern medical science. Later, this set of "Liangong" exercises was enriched and improved theoretically with the help of departments of sports medicine and sports physiology of the Shanghai Physical Culture Institute. Good results have been reported since it was popularized throughout the country in 1975. Letters of praise kept pouring in and visitors from different parts of the country often came to offer their thanks to the doctors. Some re-

lated their experience in practising the exercises, some spoke about their curative effects, and some came to take lessons. . . . .

Over the past few years, “Liangong” in 18 Exercises has gained popularity across the country. In Shanghai, instruction centres have been set up in many parks and neighbourhood communities to teach these exercises to thousands of people every day. Outpatients who have been massaged at the Dongchang Road Hospital and who are acquainted with the main points of the “Liangong” exercises are advised to continue practising at the instruction centres in their vicinity. This has effectively shortened the treatment period and consolidated the curative effects. And, last but not least, patients coming to the hospital for treatment have decreased in number. People practising the “Liangong” exercises generally have better appetite and are more vigorous and energetic than before. In Japan, popularization centres have been set up in some places to teach “Liangong”. In addition some people have been sent to China to take lessons so as to pass them on when they return home. The Shanghai Science and Educational Film Studio is now making a film on this set of exercises for the benefit of a greater number of people at home and abroad.

**China Sports Editorial Board**

## “Liangong” in 18 Exercises — Its Features and Effects

The *Liangong Shibafa*, or “Liangong” in 18 Exercises, is a complete set of therapeutic exercises for preventing and healing pains in the neck, shoulders, waist or legs and other ailments. It has been developed and gradually perfected on the basis of (1) ancient Chinese sports therapy such as *dao yin* (Breathing exercises), *Wuqinxi* (Five-Animal Game), *Baduanjin* (Eight-Section exercises) and *Yijinjing* (Changing Muscles), (2) findings of the causes and pathology of the above-mentioned pains, and (3) the curative methods of massage. It consists of six parts of exercises for preventing and relieving pains in the neck and shoulders, the waist and back, the thighs and legs, exercises for preventing and curing pains in the joints of limbs, tenosynovitis and internal disorders. Each part has its own characteristics and special effects. Practice among the masses in recent years has confirmed that *liangong* is good for keeping the body fit and for preventing and curing certain ailments. It has, therefore, gained popularity among the people, sufferers of the said pains in particular.

*Liangong* involves all-round movements of the

different parts of the body — major joints of the head, limbs and torso. Thanks to its varied movements, the whole body benefits from this set of exercises.

*Liangong* is characterized, first and foremost, by its therapy-oriented aims. Dysfunction of the joints is a common symptom of the aching neck, shoulders, waist or legs. And *liangong* by means of intensified movements, helps restore normal body functions, correct deformities and prevent and cure similar ailments. For example, those with aching shoulders find it hard to raise their arms. This is because of trouble in the joints and weakness or pathological changes in deltoid and other shoulder muscles, which are often caused by poor scapular function in circling upward and pulling back. This being the case, the function of the shoulder joints can be restored by practising such exercises as “Draw a Bow on Both Sides,” “Stretch Arms” and “Spread Wings for Flight”, which are designed to stimulate the function of the shoulder joints and strengthen the shoulder muscles.

Another feature of *liangong* which should not be neglected is that the movements should be slow and forceful. This is because those who suffer from pains in the neck, shoulders, waist or legs cannot do the exercises with rapid and forceful rhythm required of healthy people or sportsmen. Going about the exercises slowly will prevent new injuries; and to do the exercises continuously and with appropriate force will help change the abnormal relations between the force of individual muscles and that of muscled and

at the same time change the conditions for blood flow to the muscles and their metabolic oxidation. All these are aimed at lubricating the joints and lessening muscular convulsions or adhesion.

Besides being a good method of physical training, "Liangong" in 18 Exercises is conducive to health and better physique. As for its prophylactic effect, *liangong* is like other similar exercises, and it helps make one stronger physically. The better one's physique is, the greater is his resistance to diseases. As a specific physical exercise, *liangong* plays a due role in curing some chronic diseases, a role that ordinary medicine fails to do. Investigations conducted in recent years among those who have been practising *liangong* reveal that even those suffering from cardio-vascular, respiratory, intestinal or chronic diseases other than aching neck, shoulders, waist and legs have been cured with marked or satisfactory results. This probably results from regular physical exercises, including *liangong*, which help improve the function of the organic systems individually and as a whole. And this accounts for the curing and restoration of the function of those organs which have undergone pathological changes.

A basic principle in traditional Chinese medicine is to "foster what is good so as to get rid of what is bad." This, in fact, is an important theory that lays the stress on curing what is of basic importance rather than seeking temporary remedies. The curing of pathological changes in local organs is to "get rid of

what is bad” so as to “foster what is good” — this is a curative method that amounts to a temporary remedy only. On the other hand, *liangong* and other exercises are aimed at building up the physique so as to do away with local organic troubles, that is to say, the process here is to “foster what is good” so as to “get rid of what is bad”. And this is a curative method that will achieve the basic cure, a method that is more positive and reliable than the former one. The aim of “fostering what is good” is to “get rid of what is bad”; in order to “get rid of what is bad”, it is necessary to “foster what is good”. It follows what that by actively going in for *liangong* or other sports activities, the triple objective of building up the physique, keeping fit and curing ailments can be achieved.

*Liangong* is simple and easy to learn and is suitable for people of different physical conditions. Patients can do the various parts according to their stamina and conditions. For instance, sufferers of aching neck and shoulders can either do those parts for preventing and healing pains in the neck and shoulders or do the complete set of exercises. In a word, one who has pains in the neck, shoulders, waist or legs or is rather feeble and prone to diseases can be sure of building up his physique if he persists in practising *liangong*.

**Wei Junwen\***

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\*The author is a staff member of the Shanghai Physical Culture Institute.

# Points to Remember in Practising “Liangong” in 18 Exercises

## Correct Movements

Since the movements in *liangong* have specific therapy-oriented aims, they are effective only when correctly executed. People with aching neck, shoulders, waist or legs are not able to do some of these exercises due to dysfunction in certain parts of the body. In this case, they must see to it that they perform the movements in strict accordance with the requirements rather than in an “easy and comfortable” way. Take “Turn Neck” for instance. It consists of movements of the head, and it will not yield the desired results if it is done like a waist exercise. Other wrong movements include: bending the knee in “Press Palms on Feet,” not shifting the centre of gravity in “Stroll Through the Impregnable Pass with Firm Strides”, raising the heel in “Bow, Squat and Stretch Legs”, protruding the belly in “Stretch Arms and Bend Trunk” and “Expand Chest”, and inclining the torso in “Keep One Palm on Knee



and Hold Up the Other”.

### Use of “Internal Force”

“Internal force” means slow but forceful movements. Slow and forceless movements tend to be inharmonious and disconnected. The use of “internal force” is aimed at regulating the relations between the force inside the various muscles and that of individual muscles.

A muscle is made up of many contractable muscular fibres. There are many nerve endings in the muscles; those controlling the contraction of muscles are called motor nerve endings, each of which controls 100 to 300 muscular fibres. Each nerve ending and the muscular fibres it controls make a motor unit, and there are many motor units in a muscle, which are not all in a state of excitation and contraction at a given time. While some are in a state of excitation and contraction, others are in a state of restraint and relaxation. With a change in movement, these two types of motor units change, too. The muscular fibres of those units that are in a state of excitation and contraction become shortened, while those in a state of restraint and relaxation are lengthened accordingly. When muscles function normally, some parts are shortened while others are lengthened. Any posture over a long time or any protective muscular tension (or convulsive contraction) as a result of injuries is the internal kinetic cause of muscular strain or other ailments. Therefore, to change the postures