



Yin and Yang are the two terminologies used first by the Taoist to describe relationships of opposites to the whole. Yin is associated with feminine, solid, unchanged, the moon, passivity, hidden, unseen and latent potential. Yang , on the other hand, is associated with masculine, liquid, change, the sun, dynamism, obvious, clarity and work in action.

The Taoist created these two terms to help us understand that there are two polarities which we can describe in relationship to the entire phenomena we come in contact with. They are pair of opposites in the first glance. However, if we look at how the taoist depict the symbol of TAO, we will see that in the dark coloured half of Yin, there is a dot of Yang element. In the light coloured half of Yang, there is a dot of Yin element. These seemingly pair of opposites actually inter-breed and create each other.

The night does not happen without the day. The moon does not shine without the sun. The front does not exist without a back and the upper half does not exist without a lower half. The list can go on... Yin & Yang are *not* working mutually in exclusivity. They exist dependently on each other.

Yin and Yang controls each other. Excessive Yin cause Yang to be weak and vice versa is true. Winter is the time of excessive yin and summer is the time of excessive yang. When it is cold, heat is deficient and vice visa. In the body, excessive heat due to insufficient water will cause illnesses. In the world, too much aggression causes war and peace will be lessen. Therefore, Yin & Yang need to be in balance and they control each other.

Yin & Yang transform each other. In the search of balance and harmony, Yin and Yang not only creates each other and controls each other, it also supporting and transform each other in the process. From the seed (Yin) of a plant, it grows its roots (yang). From the roots which is underground (yin), it grows its trunk (yang). Therefore, yin and yang transform each other.

In the The Book of the Tao, it mentioned:

“Tao produced the One.
The One produced the two.
The two produced the three.



And the three produced the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry the Yin and embrace the Yang and through the blending of the Qi, they achieve harmony”.

This means that each phenomena are multi-facets and it works in an inter-co-operative ways in a inter-dynamic way with one another and every other things.

It is important to translate this understanding in yoga because yoga is about seeking balance. In yoga, we talk about the three stages of nature. Rajas (Yang), a dynamic state. Tamas (yin), lethargy state and Sattvic (Tao), the state of balance and clarity. It is the objective of all yoga practice to achieve the sattvic state. The question is how?

In the tradition of Hatha Yoga, it starts with the working of asana. Asanas are body orientations which one can work and feel the gross entirety of oneself. Pranayama, mudra and bandha work on the gross aspect of breath which one can feel, but cannot see. Finally, meditation on Nada (sound), which one focus on the most subtle aspect of the mind. In every stage of development, we move from yang to yin.

When working on our body, we need to understand this body. The upper half of body is yang. It is closer to heaven (as the Chinese saying) and the lower half is yin (closer to earth). The front of the body is yang and the back is yin. The organs in the body which are more anterior is considered yang and those which are more posterior is yin. Most important for yogis to understand are the three types of tissue in the body: Muscles, Connective Tissues and Bones.

Muscles are closer to the surface of the skin. Therefore, it is considered to be yang. Bones on the other hand is most interior to the body and hence yin. Connective tissues are just in-between the two. They include deep fascias, tendons and ligaments. Therefore, it has both yin and yang nature. When compare to the muscle it is yin and when compare to the bones it is yang. Muscles are elastic in nature, it changes quickly with body temperature and you can stretch more of muscles anytime when you perform an active stretch. Connective tissues are deep tissues in the body which are less responsive to stretch and bones practically never stretches. It is important for us to understand what we can effect among these three tissues to improve on our practice. More critically, we also need to recognize that Yang tissues should be engaged in a Yang way and Yin tissues should be engaged in a Yin way.

In Yoga, yang yoga is associated with movements which utilize muscles. It helps to build strength and stamina in the body. Therefore its movement is repetitive. We don't jog for one or two steps, we never lift weight one time and leave the gym. Likewise, we do our vinyasa practice with repetitive connecting movements. Yang is associated with short period of time, we do not sustain in a yang activity for the long time. For example, we do not lift weight and hold for long time. In yang yoga, we do not stand in half-moon pose for long time. We work on each repetition with short amount of time. Yang yoga is about muscular contraction. It is demanding to the joints and muscles. In order to move at a fast pace, speedy contraction and relaxation of the muscles has to happen in order to quicken the pace. Therefore, yang yoga is a good way to build weak joints and developed strength to the body in general. At the



psychological level, yang creates a “high” feeling as it the body creates more endorphin (a hormone in the body which makes one feel happy).

Yin Yoga, on the other hand targets the joints. It is about holding on to a posture by relaxing the targeted joints and its surrounding connective tissues for about 3 – 5 minutes. Therefore, it is about static traction of the joints. By holding long period of time in a relax manner, it lengthens the connective tissues around the joints to create more space for the joints. Therefore, it cultivates flexibility from within. One’s range of motion is great determined by connective tissues. Most of us started yoga with tightness of the body and when we being to practice for a while, we begin to feel that we have loosen up. However, if we choose too much yang yoga, we feel that the body will tighten up again. This is because by emphasizing on yang activity, more muscles are being growth and hence one looses flexibility quickly. Yin yoga at the psychological level build calmness and peace of mind quickly as each posture is done in a relax way.

Flexibility (yin) and strengthen (yang) are what a yogi should constantly try to balance. They are constantly in a state of flux. There is no right proportion for anyone. Everyone is different and has a different constitution. All we need to know is that when one over emphasize on muscular activities, he will loose flexibility and vice versa is true. If one has more strength currently, he should practice more yin yoga. If one is more flexibility currently, he should practice more yang yoga. The problem comes when we want to do only things we are good at and that becomes a feedback loop which draw us further away from what we need.

Yin Yoga is a perfect complementary to Yang Yoga. It works at both the physical and psychological level. Yang is dynamic and we need that to strengthen our body and build our self confidence and self –esteem. We need to awaken the body from time to time to feel the vibrancy of each cell in our body. Yin is the quiet aspect of the practice which develops flexibility. We need to have flexibility of the joints for them to function and we also need silence in our practice so that we can draw our attention inwards to experience the flow of prana.

Yin yoga brings about great mobility to the joints. With that, one can perform more dynamic postures without resistance. A dynamic practice need to wind down to yoga nidra to allow the absorption of prana back to the body. Therefore, both yin and yang yoga are highly valuable in our practice.

Today yoga has become one of the top fitness programme. Many people come in touch with yoga through gyms, which only provides high impact and dynamic yoga. While it is good, it will not be beneficial in the long run. We need to realize that the body needs both to keep its balance.

Yin and Yang Yoga are two different natures of practices which need to take place in order for the body and mind to stay in harmony. In every Yin posture you will discover the yang side of its energy. Likewise, in every yang posture, we will also



discover how you can work the yin way. Yin and Yang inter-breeds to create, support and transform each other. With this in mind, may you be successful in your practice!