

In Chinese philosophy *Yin and Yang* are complementary, interdependent opposites, neither of which can exist without the other. Each can transform into the other, and contains a seed of the other within it. *Yin and yang* describe how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

*Under Heaven all can see beauty as beauty,  
Only because there is ugliness  
All can see good only because there is evil  
Being and non-being produce each other  
The difficult is born in the easy  
Long is defined by short, the high by the low.  
Before and after go along with each other.  
So the sage lives openly with apparent duality  
And paradoxical unity..... (Tao Te Ching, second verse)*



This duality lies at the origins of many branches of classical sciences and philosophy, as well as being a primary guideline of traditional Chinese medicine and a central principle of different forms of Chinese martial art and exercise, such as t'ai chi and qigong. Duality is found in many belief systems, but Yin and Yang are parts of a Oneness that is also equated with the Tao. Everything has both yin and yang aspects. Many tangible dualities (such as light and dark, fire and water, expanding and contracting) are thought of as physical manifestations of the duality symbolised by yin and yang.

In Yoga the concept of the Tao is *Brahman*, the indescribable absolute, the supreme being, wholeness, the infinite, "THAT". Brahman is not the same as Brahma, the creator. In Hinduism Isvara is God and is manifested under 3 aspects: the creator (Brahma), the continuator (Visnu) and the destructor (Siva). However, *Brahman* is a concept beyond individual gods and God (with or without capital G) such as the Yahveh of the old testament, Allah and also Isvara in Hinduism: these are only names and representations of this absolute; so that our limited human minds are capable to relate to it. Our real nature belongs to the infinite (*Brahman*), and is within us: it is called *Atman* or the soul. We are searching for it and we want to connect with it. Although using Sanskrit names might sound as if these concepts belong to the Eastern world, the concept of Brahman or the infinite is a universal concept that could be integrated to any system of beliefs or philosophy.

The Chinese Yin and Yang are the Gunas in Yoga: three qualities that are in balance in the Absolute (the night of Brahma). They become unbalanced in the manifested Universe (the day of Brahma). Manifested forms in the Universe are anything from our body and mind to a grain of sand on a beach. These qualities are Sattva (equilibrium, light, knowledge), Rajas (activity, movement) and Tamas (rest, but also inertia, heaviness). These can be seen in any creature in the Universe and are complementary qualities. You can see it in the cycle of the seasons [Autumn and winter (Tamas), Spring (Rajas), summer (Sattva)]. Of course these qualities work together and can overlap. Each of us has a different quantity of each of these qualities. Our aim is to balance them to come to a healthy equilibrium, a more sattvic state. This is the aim of yoga: achieving balance through appropriate exercise (physical: asanas, breathing, appropriate diet), and through spiritual and emotional self-observation (appropriate relaxation and meditation). Depending on the balance of gunas in ourselves it might mean different style and practice. In that sense, we can only be our own teacher, learning from our own experience.