

THE NATURE OF QI, YIN AND YANG AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO QI GONG

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1. *Qi* can be translated as “life energy”. It gives life to all things, and to the ancient Chinese, it was the underlying reality of all physical things. The physical world is one of *qi* vibration, alternating between *yin* and *yang* energies, producing all physical things.
2. *Yin* energy comes upwards from the earth. It is moist and cooling. It moves upwards through the *yin* channels and the *Ren Mai*. *Yang* energy comes down from the sun and sky. It is warm and invigorating. It runs downwards through the *yang* channels and the *Du Mai*. When the two energies mix, it makes life possible. This is why life exists on our planet, but not others in our solar system. Earth has the perfect balance of *yin* and *yang* energies.
3. The *taiji* is best known as the *yin-yang* symbol. It represents the interaction of *yin* and *yang* energies, and by extension, the physical world. Literally, “*ta*” means “great”, and “*ji*” means “ridge line”, or “cross beam” in a house. It is best translated as *The Great Polarity*. The *taiji* represents the separation of *yin* and *yang*, as well as its interaction and merging. It creates the physical world. By comparison, beyond the *taiji* is the *wuji*. *Wu* means “none” or “no”. *Wuji* means “no ridge line”, no separation of *yin* and *yang*. It is best translated as “*The Non-Polarity*”. It is the reality beyond the physical world, the reality that lies on the other side.
3. *Qi gong* literally means “energy work”, “energy exercises” or “working the energy”. There are hundreds of *qi gong* exercises. The purpose of these exercises is to purify, strengthen and circulate the *qi* within our bodies, for health, longevity and spiritual clarity.

4. All health problems, whether due to illness, injury or aging, involve poor quality of *qi* and blood, or obstruction or stagnation of circulation of *qi* and blood. *Qi gong* exercises correct or prevent this. When *qi* and blood circulate in the channels in an unobstructed way, and when the *qi* and blood is of a good quality, one is healthy.
5. *Qi gong* exercises can be organized into several types, depending on their overall effect. One type concentrates on improving the quality and circulation of *qi* within the channels. These may move *qi* in the natural direction of the channels, or work against the natural order by bringing *yin* energy to *yang* channels or *yang* energy to *yin* channels.
6. Another type works with the quality of *qi* within the body as a whole, and not dependent on the channels. For example, condensing exercises bring *qi* from the skin, through the fascia, and into the bone marrow. This strengthens the fascia, and invigorates the bone marrow to produce healthy blood cells. “Iron shirt *qi gong*” strengthens the fascia so as to make the body strong within martial arts.
7. A third type concentrates on various chakras. The three most important chakras are the lower *dantian*, the middle *dantian* (the heart chakra) and the upper *dantian* (the third eye). The lower *dantian* strengthens the physical body, and provides a reservoir of *qi* and *jing* for health. The middle *dantian* opens the heart to spiritual experience. The upper *dantian* strengthens the mind, and allows the mind to manipulate the *qi*. Working with them together, one can move between the *taiji* and the *wuji*, to increase spiritual clarity, or to access, purify and store *qi* deep into the body.
8. The strength and power of the *qi* is accumulated through practice with focused concentration. There is no end to the degree of purification and refinement that is possible. Daily practice strengthens and circulates the *qi*, strengthens the fascia-structure, improves the health of the internal organs, and improves the quality of the blood. Collectively, *qi gong* promotes immune function, vitality, longevity and spiritual clarity.