

**Taoism and Yoga: Parallels in Meditation Philosophy and Practice and Adjunctive Physical**

**Exercises**

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Yoga (defined, here, as that discussed and laid out in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, along with the effectively adjunctive or supportive theory and practices of the Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā) shares much in common with traditional Chinese arts and sciences. Specifically, the philosophy and meditative practices of the Complete Reality<sup>i</sup> school of Taoism and the traditional martial art of Tàì Jí Quán<sup>ii</sup> (commonly "Tai chi"), are like brothers to yoga. As will be detailed below, the basic ideas, goals, and ways of attaining those goals are nearly identical. Through discussion and comparison of these parallel systems, we may come to a more clear understanding of each, and be assisted in our personal endeavors in pursuit of our own goals, as they relate to these paths.

Complete Reality Taoism, aka "Complete Realization", arose between eleventh and thirteenth centuries, bringing the essence of Buddhism (esp. Chán<sup>iii</sup>, or Zen, Buddhism), Confucianism, and Taoism together. It aims to place the higher/fundamental, "celestial" consciousness above and in control of the day-to-day, human, "earthly" consciousness. The former should lead the latter, guide it, act as its master<sup>iv</sup>.

A basic tenet of this approach to Taoism is the belief that the celestial consciousness, the spark of the divine, God, the Tao, or ultimate/fundamental consciousness, is obscured and obstructed by mundane influences, habituations, belief systems, etc. (thus leading to all types and forms of disease). Once the 'celestial' is so obscured, the earthly consciousness assumes control of the being (i.e. desires run, direct and control the being).

Often referred to as the Mind of the Tao (MT), a human has an original capacity to know the fundamental truth of a thing, of anything, directly and immediately. This is compared to the Human Mind (HM), which is the much more commonly recognized actively thinking everyday mind. It is analytical thought, based on concepts and habits (often referred to as "conditioning") learned over time.

Where the HM runs things, we confuse the false – creations of the mind – for the real, for reality (which we can (do) know directly and immediately, and for which we were originally designed). As HM functions in reaction to illusions (mental constructs) and, specifically, not reality – i.e. it is rooted in separation from reality, is nearly defined by it – the HM causes all deviations from health (the inherent, instinctive, "original" state of a human).

Through active investigation of what one considers known, one's beliefs, one's understandings of the world and, importantly, the nature of perceiving them, and how one came to know them, one can pierce the illusion, see through the veil obstructing "real knowledge", and come to know the true nature of themselves/everything.

The "goal" of Complete Reality Taoism is to be free of the controlling influence of the conditioned, habitual mind. Its aim is to "return to" (really, stay at) the original state of direct knowing to see through the false illusions of the human mind.

Importantly, it does not see the perception of illusions as inherently evil or wrong, only that attachment to them, confusion of them for being real or the actual state of things, as being the source of all suffering.

According to Cleary,

The aim of Complete Reality Taoism is to be a "real human being" rather than a willy-nilly product of socio-cultural accident, to be fully awake, autonomous, capable of exercising free will and perceiving reality directly without artificial constructs. [emphasis added]<sup>v</sup>

The parallels between this style of Taoism and "Classical" yoga are extensive and deep. Clearly, the two systems are like brothers, if not simply different aspects of the same soul.

For comparison with yoga, specific aphorisms from Patañjali's Sūtras will be selected (written in bold, coming from two sources) and similarities with Taoism drawn out. Swami Hariharananda Aranya's and Edwin Bryant's translations of the Sūtras are used, here<sup>vi</sup>, and three texts have been chosen to represent Taoism, all translated by Thomas Cleary, Ph.D.<sup>vii</sup>, including a core classic of Taoist internal alchemy, an anthology of writings from the Complete Reality school, and a book that acts as a manual on the meditative practices unique to this school<sup>viii</sup>.

(Note - What follows is a very brief review of only some basic concepts. Swami Hariharananda's text is listed first, with Bryant's in parentheses.)

**1-2 – Yoga is the suppression of the modifications of the mind (Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of the mind). 1-3 – Then the seer abides in itself (When that is accomplished, the seer abides in its own true nature).**

Here, Patañjali states that the fundamental aim of yoga is to calm the mind and to have the resulting experience/awareness. This is reflected, perfectly, in Complete Reality Taoism, though, of course, the terminology is different.

For example, an excerpt from the Golden Flower reads, “The whole practice described in this book does not go beyond the words ‘Emptiness of mind.’ It is enough to understand this. This single statement can save decades of seeking.”<sup>ix</sup>

From The Book of Balance and Harmony, in the chapter “The Source Message of the Mystic School”, under the title “The Absolute”, we see a clear parallel to the Sūtras: “Body and mind unstirring, subsequently there is yet an endless real potential”, and “With the maturation of practice of calm stability. One spontaneously arrives at this true restoration of the infinite...” Within the same chapter, under the title “Balance and Harmony”, we see the idea of calm facilitating deep, inner awareness: “Truly if one can be balanced and harmonious in oneself, then the being which is fundamentally so is clear and aware...”<sup>x</sup>

From our core classic of internal alchemy, the term “extreme stillness” could be seen as the result of Patañjali’s calming of the mental fluctuations: “... at the time of extreme stillness, when all entanglements of have ceased, the innate knowledge of the natural mind and the real knowledge of the mind of Tao have a point of brilliance which reveals a glimpse of them...”<sup>xi</sup>

There really is no goal, no “thing” to attain. In fact, the many practices and techniques could be viewed as helping one to do less, to do “non-doing”, to use one of the most popular Taoist terms.

Though an exact equivalent does not seem to be present in the yoga scriptures (to this author’s current awareness), Taoism labels this state of the seer abiding in itself as the “gold elixir”, defined succinctly as “the fundamental essence of innate knowledge and innate capacity inherent in people”, adding, quite importantly, that “This essence is intrinsically complete in everyone; it is not more in sages or less in ordinary people.”<sup>xii</sup>

**1-4 - At other times the seer appears to assume the form of the modification of the mind (Otherwise, at other times, (the seer) is absorbed in the changing states (of the mind)).**

Almost as fundamental to yoga (and Taoism) of the above is the idea that we, as human beings, tend to get “caught up” in the activities of the mind. We “lose” ourselves in the endless activity in our heads. Though there is originally and inherently calm and peace, we get lost in the mental chatter of the common, day-to-day world. From there, we stray from innate awareness and see only illusion: “The human mind is originally empty and clear, its immaterial spirit unclouded: because it is mixed with conditioned discriminating consciousness, awareness is used to produce illusion.”<sup>xiii</sup>

**1- 12 - By practice and detachment, these [modifications] can be stopped ((The vṛtti states of mind) are stilled by practice and dispassion).**

The simple idea that what’s wrong – that constant, distracting, disrupting activity of the mind – can be brought under control with effort and the sincere desire for truth, for what’s real is common in both systems.

Our thirteenth century anthology, in the chapter called “The Source Message of the Mystical School”, speaks to the need for persistent effort: “It is a matter of persistently keeping centered and balanced in activity and stillness, so that the shining mind is always present and the wandering mind does not stir.”<sup>xiv</sup>

**1-15 - When the mind loses all desire for objects seen or described in the scriptures it acquires a state of utter desirelessness which is called detachment (Dispassion is the controlled consciousness of one who is without craving for sense objects, whether these are actually perceived, or described (in scripture)). 1-16 - Indifference to the guṇas or the constituent principles, achieved through a knowledge of the nature of Puruṣa, is called Para-vairāgya (Higher than renunciation is indifference to the guṇas (themselves). This stems from perception of the puruṣa, soul).**

There is a period of some “success”, where efforts to calm the mind to know the real have effect, resulting in a sense of freedom, or liberation, or “desirelessness”, in the above. This state is a result of accurate perception and the resulting awareness.

Where there is the true seed of real knowledge, there is inner autonomy which is unmoved by contaminated energies; then the conscious knowledge of the human mind naturally stabilizes and does not fragment.<sup>xv</sup>

**1-47 - On gaining proficiency in Nirvichāra, purity in the inner instruments of cognition is developed (Upon attaining the clarity of nirvicāra-samādhi, there is lucidity of the inner self). 1-48 - The knowledge that is gained in that state is called Ṛtambharā (In that state, there is truth-bearing wisdom).**

Here, Vyāsa's commentary could be taken, nearly word for word, from either Taoist or yogic texts: “When impurities which shade the illuminating nature of Buddhi are removed there is a transparent flow of quiescence free from the taints of Rajas and Tamas...”<sup>xvi</sup>

This Nirvichāra is the “direct awareness” referred to in Taoist texts, and Ṛtambharā is directly comparable to the “medicine”, the activity of the “real knowledge of the Tao”.

The process of calming the mind, leading to an emptiness, of sorts, leads to movement: In people, this is the time of beginning movement when stillness has reached its extreme. This movement from the extreme stillness is precisely when the great medicine appears. However, this movement is not the stirring of emotions at external influences, and it is not the stirring thoughts in the mind. It is the movement of the innate knowledge of the natural mind, the movement of the real knowledge of the mind of Tao.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Pāda Two: 2-2 - From the commentary by Vyāsa - The fire of Prasamkhyāna or discriminating knowing sterilizes the attenuated Kleśas like roasted seeds. When they are attenuated, they cannot obscure the realization of the distinction between Buddhi and Puruṣa.**

The concept of Prasamkhyāna seems to be the equivalent to what is referred to as “the firing process” in Taoist internal alchemy. This absolutely essential process is where one

actively investigates what is known, ones beliefs, or so-called knowledge, in order to discern the real from the false, basically halting and challenging the fluctuations and their source.

“The words “Seek attentively” contain the directed work of investigating principles, examining things to bring about knowledge.”<sup>xviii</sup>

In the Golden Flower, the firing process is defined as the “turning around of the light”, or the conscious ceasing of chasing, effectively being controlled by, the fluctuations, the activities and free creations of the mind, in order to investigate them to know their source.<sup>xix</sup>

**2-5 – Avidyā consists in regarding a transient object as everlasting, an impure object as pure, misery as happiness and the not-self as self (Ignorance is the notion that takes the self, which is joyful, pure, eternal, to be the nonself, which is painful, unclean, and temporary).**

Taoist texts see this state as so common as to be fundamentally descriptive of our day-to-day world (the world of “sound and form”, “land and name”), referring to it as the “realm of dust”, where “misery is taken for pleasure, where the artificial is taken to be real.”<sup>xx</sup>

The above is considered by both approaches to be the ultimate goal. Meditation is the highest vehicle. However, as can be attested to by most who have tried, the above practices can be very difficult. It is unlikely the typical person, with no preparatory training, would be able to find much success with the above. Both yoga and Taoism have an answer.

Haṭha yoga is a path of yoga that seeks to cleanse the body and nāḍīs, in order to facilitate and assist the meditative process of classical yoga<sup>xxi</sup>. Verse One, Chapter One of the Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā reads:

Salutations to the glorious primal (original) guru, Sri Adinath, who instructed the knowledge of

hatha yoga which shines forth as a stairway for those who wish to ascend to the highest stage of yoga, raja yoga. [emphasis added]<sup>xxii</sup>

Haṭha yoga uses the body, the concrete, tangible aspect of a person, to engage and ground their yoga practice. It, effectively, uses the physical body as a “vehicle for liberation.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

Complete Reality Taoism, traditionally, has two systems of exercise to assist in reaching its spiritual goals, Eight Pieces of Brocade<sup>xxiv</sup>, and Tàì Jí Quán, literally, the “Supreme Ultimate Martial Art”.<sup>xxv</sup> Though Tai chi may not have been created specifically to assist in the process of self-realization – it’s generally regarded, first and foremost, a martial art – it was created with the dual intent of increasing the practitioner’s health<sup>xxvi</sup>, along with developing combat ability. Health, within the framework of Chinese medical sciences, upon which Tai chi is founded, can be understood as a direct result of the free flow of qì<sup>xxvii</sup> and blood<sup>xxviii</sup> throughout the body. Additionally, specific mention of the golden elixir has been incorporated in authoritative Tai chi manuals as the purpose of Tai chi meditative practices.<sup>xxix</sup>

The common theme between Haṭha yoga and Tai chi<sup>xxx</sup> is the emphasis, primary focus, on movement of qì/ prāṇa through the body<sup>xxxi</sup>, and they both are effective in calming the mind to facilitate greater health (in, and of, itself, as well as through increasing the effectiveness of sitting meditation).

Greater detail will follow below, but the main difference between Tai chi and Haṭha yoga is that the art of Tai chi is centered around the practicing of the Tai chi form, a flowing sequence of postures, executed in smooth, fluid, constant motion, lasting anywhere from ten to twenty minutes for one repetition<sup>xxxii</sup>. It is through this physical movement that qì is circulated throughout the body, and it is this movement that could easily be interpreted as circulating prāṇa via the five vayus.

Prāṇa is the one energy, the one power, running the body, and is functionally differentiated into five vayus, or “winds”, in accomplishing that function, “I alone, dividing myself into five parts, support this body and uphold it”<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Between the five vayus, all aspects of being, physically, emotionally, energetically, etc. are taken care of. For the purposes of this discussion, only that aspect of the vayus related to movement, as within āsana, will be discussed.

Prāṇa vayu, the “master” prāṇa<sup>xxxiv</sup> or “vital air”<sup>xxxv</sup>, is that vayu behind all movement of the body, especially forward or propulsive movement<sup>xxxvi</sup>, as in the various Warrior poses, where the chest is extended forward. It also governs intake and absorption, on all levels, such as intake of sensory perceptions, food, emotions, and inhalation during prāṇāyāma<sup>xxxvii,xxxviii</sup>. Prāṇa vayu has been referred to as the energizing prana, and is important in stimulating prāṇā for other āsana, Sun Salutations being an excellent example.

Apāna vayu is that aspect of prāṇa that provides grounding. It has a descending and stabilizing action, allowing us a sense of support<sup>xxxix</sup>. It is contrasting in action to udāna vayu, which governs upward movement of the body, especially of the spine, allowing an erect posture<sup>xl</sup>. These two vayus provide vertical movement, lifting/rising and lowering/sinking<sup>xli</sup>. This lifting effect of udāna vayu has a similar effect on the being as prāṇa vayu, being energizing and exhilarating<sup>xlii</sup>.

Samāna and vyāna vayus are the expanding/contracting pair. Where apāna vayu provides grounding and support through a downward effect, the pelvis grounding down through the legs and feet, samāna vayu offers a grounding, centering movement. It is focused at our very center of gravity, at the navel, “in the middle”<sup>xliii</sup>, the “space between heaven and earth”<sup>xliiv</sup>. From this central station it offers a contracting and consolidating movement<sup>xliv</sup>, as is experienced during twists. This inward movement could also be seen as assimilation<sup>xlvi</sup>, or drawing in, as occurs during the digestive process.

Paired with this inward, centering energy is vyāna vayu, the outward, expanding movement<sup>xlvii</sup>. Having much in common with the very circulation of prāṇa, vyāna moves in the nāḍīs and subsidiary vessels, according to the Praśna Upanishad, thus pervading the entire body<sup>xlviii</sup>.

The movement of the Tai chi form could easily be described, taught, and practiced according to the above vayus. As an “internal” martial art<sup>xlix</sup>, its emphasis is on skill and power through movement of qì. All of its practices and training techniques are designed to open up, and allow for the free flow of qì<sup>l</sup>.

During the practice of the Tai chi form, there is much emphasis placed on constant rooting or grounding and the resultant energy moving up through the feet<sup>li</sup>. This

grounding is easily understood as apāna vayu, and the energy movement through the feet and up the legs could be seen as udāna vayu, especially as it rises through the spine, as discussed below.

Qì is generated in this manner and then can be used for both offensive and defensive actions. To do this, one takes this energy from the feet and legs, directs it with the waist (which may be either samāna or vyāna vayu), the energy traveling up the spine. Then it can be led to and expressed out the shoulder, elbow, or hand as a strike, for example (see endnote xli). This movement from the spine out to the limb is clearly vyāna vayu.

For defensive movement, Tai chi employs a type of jìn<sup>lii</sup>, or martial energy, that effectively absorbs or draws-in an attack. Being caught in it is much like being sucked in, as if by a vacuum. I propose that this is a powerful expression of samāna vayu. The drawing in is typically done towards the center of the practitioner, often involves a twisting intent, if not overt motion, and has the definite feel of pulling inward.

More generally, Tai chi is motion with constant grounding (apāna vayu) and raising of qì (udāna vayu), with individual postures linked together creating a rhythmic contraction, drawing in, followed by expansive, striking out (samāna vayu and vyāna vayu, respectively).

For practical demonstration purposes, the opening movement, Qǐ Shì<sup>liii</sup> “Rising”, offers an excellent opportunity to practice cycling through raising and lowering, apāna and udāna vayu, and allowing the energy of udāna vayu to travel up the spine, then use vyāna vayu to express qì out through the arms to the fingertips. It may also be possible to isolate the very subtle circle occurring with the arms drawing up and out, then in and down, engaging samāna vayu to pull them in wards.

There are several sequences that demonstrate the expansion/contraction aspects of the Tai chi form. For example, in “Wild Horse Parts Its Mane”<sup>liiv</sup>, one arm raises and extends outwards (udāna and vyāna vayu), while the other arm draws down and slightly to the rear (apāna vayu). This is followed by contracting, with a twisting motion, into “Holding Ball” (samāna vayu), and then is repeated on the other side of the body. (All this occurs simultaneously with the practitioner grounding through the feet (apāna vayu), and using that action to pull qì up the leg (udāna vayu) to drive all other movements of the body.)

“Holding Ball” is a great practice for samāna vayu. It appears throughout the form as an excellent transitioning posture, this transitioning always acting as a consolidation between other moves, a coming back together, back to center, in between other actions, thus allowing or facilitating all following actions<sup>lv</sup>. It also incorporates the hands being held in a position mimicking holding a beach ball. This hand motion mirrors the lower dān tián<sup>lvi</sup>, or lower abdomen, where samāna vayu is centered.

Within what are commonly referred to as the “Four Essential Actions”, there are excellent examples of straight forward striking type movements (e.g. in Jī<sup>lvii</sup>, “Press”), using vyāna vayu, and, not as of yet mentioned, prāṇa vayu is demonstrated quite clearly in Péng<sup>lviii</sup> (“Ward off”), where a roundness is created with the leading arm and chest. The defensive action mentioned above is also demonstrated in Lù<sup>lix</sup> (“Rollback”), where there is sinking dominating raising (apāna vayu pervading over udāna vayu), combined with a slight deflecting motion, twisting, where the attacker is drawn in (samāna vayu).

An experienced yoga practitioner, who experiences the vayus during their āsana, will likely be able to pick up Tai chi rather quickly and practice it at a relatively advanced level, putting themselves years ahead of the typical beginning Tai chi student.

Alternately, the practice of proper Tai chi greatly assists and advances one’s yoga practice, both āsana and meditation practices.

As they are so similar, yet having a key difference (one predominantly static, the other dynamic) there is ample room for combined practice, the benefits of which are likely to be quite remarkable.

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<sup>i</sup> Quán zhēn, 全真, “Complete Reality” (a philosophical school of Taoism).

<sup>ii</sup> Tàì Jí Quán 太極拳, “Supreme Ultimate Martial Art”.

<sup>iii</sup> Chán 禪.

<sup>iv</sup> Cleary, 1987.

<sup>v</sup> Cleary, 1987, p. 21.

<sup>vi</sup> Hariharananda's was used as it gives Vyāsa's bhāṣya (commentary) in full (important since it's considered as canonical as the Sūtras, themselves, some even considering Vyāsa to be Patañjali, himself (Bryant, 2009, p. xl)), as well as extensive and quite informative modern commentary by Mukerji.

Bryant's translation is very useful as it acts almost like a concordance of historical commentaries, with Bryant including excerpts and interpretations (from Vyāsa, as well as the Vivaraṇa and the Tattva–vaiśārādī, plus others) where they help illuminate essential concepts, but not relaying so much as to cloud the important points with, ultimately empty, debate over less relevant bits of detail. Bryant also, regularly, compares and contrasts yoga, as a distinct system of philosophy, with other, similar philosophies, eg. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika (p. 40) to help differentiate what makes Yoga unique. Lastly, Bryant makes some comments, in regards to translation, that this author appreciates, as a junior translator himself. An example would be “It is best, in my view, to retain the Sanskrit terms, rather than perpetuate clumsy English translations, which sometimes can be just as abstruse and incomprehensible and thus of no greater usefulness to the reader than the Sanskrit terms they replace” (p. 150).

<sup>vii</sup> Thomas Cleary received his Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilization from Harvard University and is a preeminent translator of texts from the Taoist cannon.

viii The first, and primary, source for this discussion is Cleary's translation of *Understanding Reality* (Wù Zhēn Piān, 悟真篇, aka "Book on Awakening to Reality"), written in the Sung dynasty (960–1279), with commentary by Liu I-ming, a Qing dynasty Taoist writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries who made great efforts to help reduce obscurity so common in classic Taoist alchemical literature. This book, originally written by Zhāng Bó Duān (张伯端) (983–1082), founder of the southern branch of Complete Reality school of Taoism, is considered one of the basic classics of Taoist "internal alchemy" (practices for attaining realization) (Cleary, 1987).

The second text chosen, Cleary's *The Book of Balance and Harmony* (a translation of Zhōng Hé Jí, 中和集), is a collection of Taoist writings from the Complete Reality school, originally written by Lǐ Dào chún (李道纯) in the thirteenth century.

The last text is the closest to an actual meditation manual, focusing on spelling out the specific practice, or application, of Complete Reality philosophy. *The Secret of the Golden Flower: The Classic Chinese Book of Life* (Tài Yì Jīn Huā Zōng Zhǐ, 太乙金花宗旨), also known as the *Teaching of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One*, was originally written by Lu Yan, about 250 years ago.

ix Cleary, 1991, p. 46.

x Cleary, 1989, p. 3.

xi Cleary, 1987, p. 40.

xii Cleary, 1987, p. 38.

xiii Cleary, 1987, p. 34.

xiv Cleary, 1989, p. 6.

xv Cleary, 1987, p. 35.

xvi Mokerji, 1983, p. 104.

xvii Cleary, 1987, p. 40.

xviii Cleary, 1987, p. 47.

xix Cleary, 1991.

xx Cleary, 1987, p. 27.

xxi Muktibodhananda, 1998.

xxii Muktibodhananda, 1998, p. 23.

xxiii PranaYoga and Ayurveda Mandala, 2010, p. 1.12.

xxiv Bā Duàn Jīn, 八段锦, "Eight Pieces of Brocade" (a widely popular style of qi gong).

xxv Cleary, 1987.

<sup>xxvi</sup> One well respected Tai chi master, Tsung Hwa Jou, states outright that “The highest use of the Yang form [the most widely known and practiced style of Tai chi] is in the cultivation of health” (Jou, 1991, p. 83).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Qì气, typically left untranslated (as in the primary introductory textbook used in most Chinese medical schools, Giovanni Maciocia’s Foundations); is something like bioenergy, but also having an innate knowingness about it. Translated as “influence” by one leading expert of Chinese medical history (Unschuld, 1985); is similar to yoga’s prāṇa प्राण.

<sup>xxviii</sup> 血, xuè, similar to modern, biomedically defined blood, though emphasis is typically placed less on the concrete, material aspect of the fluid, and more on its nourishing function.

<sup>xxix</sup> Olson, 1993.

<sup>xxx</sup> There are several different main styles of Tai chi, as well as many more variations of these main styles, plus many Tai chi forms using traditional weapons, such as sword and spear. Yang style (technically, “Yang family” style – 楊氏) (empty handed, eg. no weapon) is, by far, the most widely known and practiced. It is the style that is done at a slow, even pace. For these reasons, this paper and discussion relates to Yang style Tai chi. It needs to be noted, however, that there is another main style, Chen family (陳氏). Chen Tai chi is the original form and, in practice, looks significantly different from Yang. The combat applications are apparent in Chen, where there are many dynamic, powerful movements, including punches and kicks.

Generally, Yang style is practiced for its ability to open up qì flow (hence, its popularity for health enhancement), while Chen style is practiced to train the combat applications – the powerful emission of qì during strikes (though, it, to, has significant health benefits, when practiced correctly).

<sup>xxxi</sup> It will be noted that the Praśna Upanishad states that it is vyāna vayu that flows through the nāḍīs. This statement seems to equate that specific aspect of prāṇa with the Chinese medical concept of jīng qì (经气). Jīng qì is that type of qì that flows through the acupuncture channels and is affected directly by acupuncture treatment.

<sup>xxxii</sup> It is interesting that one of the major distinguishing points of Tai chi and yoga is that Tai chi is movement based, while yoga is, for the most part, static. According to Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha, from the Bihar School of Yoga, “Prana becomes visible on the physical plane as motion and action...” (p. 374). It was exactly such a thought that excited this author about looking at Tai chi through the eyes of yoga, i.e. the vayus. They are so clearly seen and experienced in Tai chi, because it is a moving form, while in static yoga āsana, they can be much more difficult to isolate and identify.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Nikhilananda, 1990, p. 165.

xxxiv Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xxxv PranaYoga and Ayurveda Mandala, 2010, p. 5.21.

xxxvi Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xxxvii Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xxxviii Muktibodhananda, 1998.

xxxix Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xi Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xii Dr. Frawley (Frawley & Kozak, 2001) is of this opinion, assigning propulsive, forward movement to prāṇa vayu (p. 246), whereas class notes from PranaYoga and Ayurveda Mandala, suggest it is prāṇa vayu that is contrasting in action to apāna vayu (instead of udāna vayu), as far as lifting/grounding movement.

xlii Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xliii Nikhilananda, 1990, p. 171.

xliv Nikhilananda, 1990, p. 173.

xlv Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xlvi Muktibodhananda, 1998, p. 155.

xlvii Frawley & Kozak, 2001.

xlviii Nikhilananda, 1990.

xlix Versus an “external” or hard style, where emphasis is placed on muscular strength and force.

<sup>1</sup> In an interesting parallel to Kripalu styled yoga, the first and primary specific type of martial qì (jìn, 劲) to be developed is “Listening” qì (tīng jìn, 听劲), where the intent is on hearing, or sensing, one’s own qì, first, and eventually the opponent’s energy and intent. This allows one the capability to respond in exact and appropriate measure for the given interaction. To do this requires effortful quieting of the mind and training to sense or know what is present. This is its primary (and distinguishing) strategy as a martial art.

This reminds this author of the importance of personal inquiry and primacy of mindful presence during āsana, within the Kripalu tradition.

<sup>ii</sup> Absolutely fundamental and essential to correct Tai chi practice and all of its health benefits is this idea, stated in the Tai chi classics as such:

The internal energy, ch’i [qì] roots at the feet, then transfers through the legs and is controlled from the waist, moving eventually through the back to the arms and fingertips. (Liao, 1990, p. 89)

<sup>iii</sup> Jìn 劲, martial qì.

lii Qǐ Shì, 起势, “Rising”.

liv Yě Mǎ Fēn Zōng, 野马分鬃, “Wild Horse Parts Its Mane”.

lv This type of talk is also very consistent with the Earth (tǔ, 土) phase, from the traditional Chinese Five Phase theory (Wǔ xíng, 五行, aka “Five Elements”). And, in fact, samāna vayu has much in common with Earth phase. Earth corresponds with the Chinese medically defined organ systems of Spleen and Stomach (these systems incorporating the physical organs, but are far from limited to them), and is responsible for digestion and assimilation. It is discussed as the center of all the other systems, and is of prime importance in Complete Reality style meditation practices, as it represents the ability to focus, and maintain focus (the very act of mindfulness, presence, etc. that defines “meditation”), as well as other more esoteric aspects of internal alchemy.

In another interesting (but less and less shocking) parallel, according to the translation of the Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā coming out of the Bihar school, samāna vayu is the most important vayu (p. 155).

lv Dān tián, 丹田, “elixir field” (a center of qì, similar to yoga’s cakras, commonly “chakra”, cakra चक्र; traditionally, there are three dān tiáns – upper, middle, and lower).

lv Ji, 挤, “Press”.

lv Péng, 棚, “Ward off”.

lv Lù, 履, “Rollback”.

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 PranaYoga and Ayurveda Mandala Training Center

Supplement

The Tai Chi form (Yang family), first sequence:

- 1) Qǐ Shì "Rising"<sup>i</sup> – hands raise/lower
- 2) "Holding Ball", left (left hand held high), pivoting 90° right
- 3) "Wild Horse Parts Its Mane"<sup>ii</sup>, right (right hand held high), stepping right foot out
- 4) "Holding Ball", right (right hand held high), pivoting 90° left
- 5) "Wild Horse Parts Its Mane", left (left hand held high), stepping left foot out
- 6) "Holding Ball", left (left hand held high), pivot 90° right
- 7) Péng "Ward off"<sup>iii</sup>, stepping right, right hand/arm out front
- 8) Lù "Rollback"<sup>iv</sup>, shifting weight to right foot, both arms drawing back
- 9) Jǐ "Press"<sup>v</sup>, shifting weight to left foot, left hand pushing right arm
- 10) Lù "Rollback", shifting weight to right foot, bath hands draw back
- 11) Àn "Push Forward"<sup>vi</sup>, shifting weight to left foot, both hands push

Tai Chi Posture	Vayus Engaged	Discussion
Qǐ Shì "Rising"	Apāna, udāna, samāna, vyāna	Apāna/udāna in lifting/rising and sinking; a little vyāna in mvmt of hands outward as they rise up; a little samāna in drawing arms down and inward
*** All throughout the form	Apāna, udāna, vyāna	All with grounding apāna, raising udāna, vyāna moving/directing hips/waist/limbs
"Holding Ball"	Apāna, samāna	Samāna in twisting; apāna in sinking
"Wild Horse Parts Its Mane"	Apāna, vyāna, prāṇa	Vyāna in arm moving out, with a little prāṇa; apāna and a little vyāna in arm moving down and back
Péng "Ward off"	Apāna, prāṇa	Prāṇa in the lead arm; a little apāna in rear arm
Lù "Rollback"	Apāna, samāna	Apāna in the rear/downward mvmt; samāna twist and draw in
Jǐ "Press"	Vyāna	Vyāna attacking arm
Àn "Push Forward"	Vyāna	Vyāna double hand attack

## The Vayus

Apāna – Grounding, rooting, from hips through legs into and through feet

Udāna – upwards, rising mvmt, especially through spine

Samāna – contracting, drawing in, usually with a twist

Vyāna – expanding out, limbs moving outward

Prāṇa – propulsive mvmt forward

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<sup>i</sup> Qǐ Shì “Rising” 起勢

<sup>ii</sup> Wild Horse Parts Its Mane” Yě Mǎ Fēn Zōng, 野马分鬃

<sup>iii</sup> Péng, 棚, “Ward off”

<sup>iv</sup> Lù, 履, “Rollback”

<sup>v</sup> Jī, 挤, “Press”

<sup>vi</sup> Àn, 按, “Push Forward”