

The Theory of *Yin* and *Yang* in Traditional Chinese Medicine

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What is yin and Yang? Yin and yang means the two fundamental principles or forces in the universe, ever opposing and supplementing each other.

Originally, yin and yang was included in the category of the ancient philosophy of China. At first, yin and yang meant whether a place faces the sun or not. The place being exposed to the sun is yang; whereas the place not having a southern exposure is yin. The southern side of a mountain is yang, while the northern side of it is yin.

Subsequently, through long –term living, practice, and observation of every kind of natural phenomenon, people have to come to realize that yin and yang ,the two compositions which oppose each other ,exist in all thing, and that , furthermore , their interaction promote the occurrence , development and transformation of thing. In consequence yin and yang is used as the means of reasoning things out in analysing all the phenomena in the natural world.

The impact of yin and yang theory on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) theoretical system and finally it, itself, becomes an important component part of the basic theory of TCM.

Yin and yang is embodied in every aspect of TCM's theoretical system. It is used to explain the tissues and structures, physiology and pathology of the human body, and direct clinical diagnosis and treatment.

According to the theory of yin and yang, it is considered that opposite but united phenomena between yin and yang exist between inside and outside, exterior and interior, dorsal and ventral aspects of every tissue and structure of the human body. When speaking of yin and yang, in the human body, the upper part is yang, the lower part yin; the exterior is yang, the interior is yin; the back is yang , the abdomen is yin; the lateral aspect of the extremities is yang ,the medial aspect is yin. When speaking of yin and yang of the internal organs in the body , the five zang-organs including the heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney ,are yin, because their functions of preserving vital substance tend to be stable; while the six fu-organs ,i.e. the gallbladder, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, urinary bladder and sanjiao (triple cavities),are yang.

In TCM, it is thought, that the imbalance of yin and yang is one of the basic pathogeneses of a disease. For example, preponderance of yang leads to hyperfunction of the organism and heat manifestation, while preponderance of yin causes hypofunction of the organism or endogenous cold symptom.

As one of the basic pathogeneses of a disease is the imbalance of yin and yang, no matter how intricate and volatile its clinical manifestations, can be diagnosed with the theory of yin and yang. Although diseases are classified as exterior syndrome or interior syndrome according to their locations, and as cold syndrome or heat syndrome, deficiency syndrome or excess syndrome according to their nature, if the theory of yin and yang is used, the types of exterior, heat and excess are diagnosed yang syndrome ; interior ,cold and deficiency belong to yin syndrome. From the above we can understand that in making a diagnosis in TCM, the first important thing is ascertain whether the disease is yin or yang.

How is the theory of yin and yang used in treating diseases in TCM? For example, preponderance of yang leads to hyper-function of the organism and heat manifestation, which is termed as excess heat syndrome. In treating the above excess heat syndrome, herbs of cold and cool nature should be used in order to inhibit the preponderance of yang; and preponderance of yin leads to hypo-function of the organism or endogenous cold which is called cold-deficiency syndrome . In treating the above, herbs of a warm-heat nature should be applied so as to restrict the predominance of yin, i.e. the cold syndrome should be treated with the herbs warm in property accordingly.

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