

The Innovation in the Choreography of Combinations of Group Yoga Asanas

Boya Duan

Faculty of Physical Education, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, 102206, China

E-mail: 421838300@qq.com

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Abstract: Yoga is a newly emerging modern health leisure sport with the function of cultivating health and mind and bodybuilding. At present, the number of yoga fans is on the rise in our country. They can choose different asanas of varied degrees of difficulty according to their own physical condition and characteristics in learning and practicing yoga. Currently, more and more yoga fans are participating in the competition of practicing yoga, and group yoga is gaining popularity among fans. In the music background of different themes, the group members can demonstrate different yoga asanas and formations to present an innovated complete set asana combination finally. Excellent results of group yoga competition are based on the comprehensive effect of many factors, and the innovation in the choreography of combination of asanas will directly influence the result of competition. This research mainly adopted documentation method, expert interview method, video observation method and logic analysis method; and regarded the innovation in the choreography of asana combinations of group yoga at the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing as the object of research. The article conducted a systematic and over all analysis of the role of making innovation in the choreography of asana combinations of group yoga in raising the ability, quality and level in the choreography of asanas and in triggering the practicing enthusiasm among yoga fans, calling more people to get involved in the study and choreography of yoga. The purpose is to boost the physique of the whole nation and finally realize the goal of raising the level of yoga in our country.

As a sport among the difficulty and beauty expressed event-group led by skill, combination of asanas plays an extremely important role in the contest, and it even can directly influence the final achievement of the group yoga contest. Therefore, both the athletes and instructors spare no efforts to design a set of novel movement combination to attract the audience's attention and get the referee's favor. Although the choreography of combination of asanas include many aspects, the innovation in formation arrangement, interpretation of the theme music, choice of difficult asanas and quality in completion of asanas for the group are key to the final result. So I based on the research of my predecessors, carried out research on several aspects in the innovation in the choreography of combination of asanas for group yoga in our country in consideration of the suggestions from professional yoga instructors and experts. This article focused on the exploration of innovation in the choreography of combination of asanas.

Summary of Literature

According to the needs of the thesis, I inquired relevant documents through searching “yoga”, “combination of asanas” and “choreography” on the website of www.cnki.net, including periodicals and doctoral and master's dissertations, and made analysis of relevant reference literature before arriving at the following conclusion:

In the foreign literature, the scientific research in this area was more focused on the impact on psychology and the development of physical functions as well as medical curative effect. Raghuraj P, Telles S pointed out that yoga course can help boost strength of muscles and agility and improve visual perception^[1]. The yoga course in the school helps students to produce positive mood.

¹P.Raghuraj and S.Telles : Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology, Vol.41(1999)No.4.

Compared with physical exercise, the degree of indignity, depression and fatigue is notably reduced after practicing yoga. Yoga can bring unique benefits to the students on physical education. Compared with sports, practicing yoga has obvious psychological or physiological function^[2]. Cramer. H analyzed the curative effect of yoga for 967 patients suffering from chronic lower back pain in 10 random control experiments, providing effective evidence for yoga reducing the agony of patients suffering from lower back pain as a mild and effective sport; and thought it is an auxiliary treatment that can be recommended^[3].

Among the domestic literature, the contents related to the difficulty and beauty expressed event-group include the combination of movements in group dancing, requiring abundant patterns and varied presentations in formation, the mobility of the formation showing the neatness and smoothness, and the levels of the formation being pleasing and visually intriguing. The style of clothing should be consistent with that of music to enhance the fun and glamour of the contest^[4]. In *The Analysis of Choreography of Combination of Movements of Competitive Group Aerobics Under the Guidance of Rules*, Wu Qiong put forward that “Based on the competition rules, we can enrich the combination of movements with the means of innovation according to the personal characteristics of the athletes to create concrete combinations of movements to bring out the perfect performance of the athletes”^[5]. Among the literature related to the choreography of yoga, Chen Zhen pointed out in the article titled *Technical Analysis of Combinations of Asanas for Outstanding Yoga Bodybuilding Athletes* that when arranging the combinations of asanas for bodybuilding yoga, we should choose the material matching the personal characters of athletes to compose the music complying with the characteristics of bodybuilding yoga and having passion^[6]. The choreography of the combination of asanas should choose the asanas the practitioners can finish according to their physical condition and physique; a set of complete and overarching asanas will exercise all parts of the body to promote the balanced development of body and mind in an all-round way; the asanas should be completed with corresponding breath^[7]. The article titled *Choreographic Method and Choice of Music for Dance Yoga Asanas* said that the choreography of Dance Yoga asanas should pay attention to the wholeness of yoga, reasonable transition of asanas and characteristics of target practitioners; and should make full use of the modern media in terms of method^[8].

Object and Method of the Research

Object. The events of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing in 2019

Methods. Documentaton method. I searched and collected a wide scope of documents and materials related to all kinds of yoga and yoga competitions as well as similar ones in the difficulty and beauty expressed event-group. I logged-on www.cnki.net and found more than 30 reference articles by searching the keyword “yoga”. So, I got an understanding of the history of yoga, its development, spread, innovation and integration in our country. I made a statistical analysis of the videos of domestic and international yoga contests, obtaining a full understanding of yoga and rules of yoga contests as the theoretical support for writing the thesis.

Expert interview method. For the purpose of research, I conducted many discussions and exchanges about the content of this research thesis with yoga instructors as well as the referees and instructors of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing through such channels as face-to-face meeting, telephone call, SMS, E-mail, etc. By referring to the opinions and suggestions of the experts and team leaders, I laid a foundation

²C.Joshua, M.Smith, Sat Bir and S.Khalsa: *Contemporary School Psychology*, Vol.19(2015)No.3

³R.Cramer and H.Haller: *Clinical Journal of Pain*, Vol.29.(2013)No.5,p450

⁴YX.Li: *Research on the Formation Choreography of Given Combinations of Movements in Group Dance*(Beijing Sport University, 2019)

⁵Q.Wu: *The Analysis of Choreography of Combination of Movements of Competitive Group Aerobics Under the Guidance of Rules*(MS.Beijing Sport University, 2019)

⁶Z.Chen: *Research of Wushu*, Vol.3(2018)No.12,p90

⁷C.X.Chen: *Journal of Yunnan Institute of Socialism*, (2014)No.4,p378

⁸J.L.Zhang and Y.Y.Tu: *Contemporary Sport Science and Technology*, (2018) No.31,p 239.

for this thesis in both the theory and practice.

Video analysis method. I went to the venue holding the contest to watch and shoot the event video and record the results of the contest related to the research contents of the thesis in person. After the event, I carried out technical analysis of the asanas of the video of group yoga event of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing to study the characteristics of the varying formation of the athletes, the theme of music and skillful movements signaling degree of difficulty.

Comparison analysis method. I carried out comparison analysis of the champion(the first place) and runner-up (the second place) of the group yoga event of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing via the video. Comparative statistics were made from aspects of formation change, the thematic music and asanas of different degrees of difficulty. After collecting and reorganizing the data obtained, I summarized the results.

Results and Analysis

Innovation in Formation Variation of the Combination of Asanas. Compared with the individual event, the change of formation is extremely important in the group event. The rich pattern of formation would make the whole combination of asanas smooth and changeable. The quick-changing and vivid formation presented the group event often took the audience's breath away. So, the group yoga seems mysterious and people can see it but cannot do it by themselves. Common formations were point, straight line, curve, round, triangle, rhombus and irregular pattern. The incessant change and movement of formation produced different emotions and different aesthetic enjoyment at the same time. All this resulted in the visually intriguing effect at last. The innovated changing process in the formation of the group yoga event couldn't be ignored. The alternating stillness and movement during the change of asanas should be smooth and ingenious, looking graceful. Otherwise, it seemed confused and disorderly.

Table 1. The 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing

	Champion (The first prize)	Runner-up (The second prize)
Straight line	3	4
Curved line	1	2
Round	3	2
Symmetrical pattern	5	4
Asymmetrical pattern	5	2
Number of variation	9	8

From Table 1, we can see the varying formations of group yoga asanas were mainly symmetrical patterns followed by straight lines, asymmetrical patterns and rounds. Comparatively speaking, less curved lines were used. In terms of choreography of formation, the gap between the champion and runner-up was mainly shown by the following several points: ①Formation variation is common and mediocre, lacking innovation; lacking exchange and interaction among the team members; less large-scale group patterns. ②The transition between different asanas was stiff; and the change of formations lacks artistic charm and skill. ③Formation variation focused more on quantity but not quality. There were less original patterns of formation due to lack of a sense of innovation. Of course, the champion had its own unique characteristics and advantages as follows: ①It fully integrated the characteristics of traditional culture into the choreography of all combinations of asanas and also included of the current elements in popular culture into the variations of formation, a thorough display of cultural characters. ②The actions of all team members were synchronous and the change of formation was rapid and smooth with a high degree of completeness in each asana. ③There were many innovative elements in combination of asanas, such as “one in contrast of many” and “many in contrast of many”, which took full advantage of the reasonable allocation of team members to add charm to formation variation.

Innovation in the Thematic Music. The production of an outstanding work is inseparable from its thematic music. Music is the soul of the whole work. The choreographer must possess unique ability in the appreciation and harnessing of music to fully express the emotions and thoughts of the performers in the work. Among the combinations of asanas for group yoga, the music and asanas are integrated. In the innovative choice of music, other music forms and accompaniments can be considered, for example, adding a series of currently popular songs which will easily resonate among the audience. The audience will sing lightly with it, so contributing to the higher differentiation degree of the work. The music of the work can also adopt folk tunes of ethnic minorities or local characters to cooperate with the asanas. Traditional Chinese music can also be added to express the emotions. In this way, the work will have the elements of traditional Chinese culture and present the national culture of Chinese civilization with a long history to the whole world. For example, the music used by the champion of the group yoga event of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing was the theme song of the popular film Youth. Each of us has his/her own youth time and an unforgettable memory of youth. The music and asanas complement each other. Music is functional by serving the combination of asanas, but it can strengthen the style of combination of asanas at the same time. So, it is one of the important factors for the team of group yoga to beat others. How to produce original, unique and moving music according to the personal conditions and technical characteristics of the athletes and the cultural characteristics of our nation has already become one of the important trends for the development of group yoga contest in the future.

Innovation in Skillful Difficult Asanas. Difficult asanas represent one of the important components of combinations of asanas for group yoga. Difficult asanas mean that athletes utilize the internal strength to change the relative position of different parts of their body, completing technical movements of different degrees of complexity by ensuring the center of gravity of their body moves along a certain orbit. They are the foundation for the value of combinations of asanas and also the demonstration of comprehensive capability^[9]. The skillful difficult asana of yoga is the technical movement by adding different degrees of difficulty to the basic asana by the practitioner. It can be finished independently by an individual or be finished with the assistance of other team members. The common skillful difficult asanas among combinations of asanas for group yoga are mainly balance asanas.

Table 2. Count of difficulty grades of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing

	Champion (The first prize)	Runner-up (The second prize)
Asana of the first grade of difficulty	2	3
Asana of the second grade of difficulty	5	4
Asana of the third grade of difficulty	7	6
Asana of the fourth grade of difficulty	3	2
Asana of the fifth grade of difficulty	2	0

Taking the national reference form for standard bodybuilding yoga asanas as an example, we can see there was a certain gap between the runner-up and champion in terms of the total number of movements of the fourth/fifth grade of difficulty from Table 2. Usually difficult asanas are allocated in the middle/climax/final posture of a performance in the contest. In the performance of the 3rd Yoga Asana and Group Yoga Presentation Contest of Institutions of Higher Learning in Beijing,

⁹X.H.Kuang :Aerobics (Higher Education Press, Beijing, 2011, 10)

against the background of graceful and lyrical music, the female members of the champion team finished an asana of halfway hanging in the air led by the support of a single arm of the male members followed by a double balance asana and finally the technical asana of groups made up of several people. This increased the difficulty in choreography of asanas and performance, what's more, shift of space and change in the number of people in groups accompanied the change of asanas, becoming the finishing touch of the whole performance. At the same time, it was harmonious with the style of the theme and also a perfect match for the music. Meanwhile, the key to the choreography of the combination of asanas is to allocate the difficulty of different types to different difficult asanas in a more balanced way by making the best of abilities and advantages of each member of the team.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the choreography of the combination of asanas, we should take into full consideration the formation variation of a team, style of the thematic music and skillful difficult asanas. The choreographer should fully understand the personal characteristics of the team members and design proper difficult asanas based on the principle of having different requirement for different individuals and making progress step by step.

Innovation is needed in the choreography of group yoga asanas since only innovating can make breakthrough to some extent. In order to facilitate the further development of group yoga asanas in our country, we should keep in line with the international practice by strengthening communication and study. The choreographers should cultivate scientific spirit in making innovation, absorb the essence of diversified culture and art and raise their own artistic accomplishment and professional ability constantly.

We should seek to strengthen the theoretical research for the choreography of group yoga asanas, improve the theoretical system of yoga asanas in our country gradually, and promote the development of group yoga asanas in our country and relevant scientific research level. The theory stems from practice and serves practice. The combination of theory and practice would advance the development of yoga of our country.

We are to understand the real-time development trend of yoga, research and master the new tendency in the technical development of yoga, and create the elements of asanas with Chinese characteristics which comply with China's actual conditions by making bold innovation and based on ingenious conception. The final end is to produce unique group yoga works.

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