

# A Study of Style Characteristics and Fitness Value of Yang-Style Tai Chi

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**Abstract:** With its fitness boxing as one of the major practices contributing to people's healthy life in modern society, Yang-style Tai Chi is the valuable cultural heritage of Chinese nation. In this paper, literature review, logical analysis and other researching methods are applied to discuss and analyze the origin, development, style characteristics and fitness value of Yang-style Tai Chi. Suitable for learners at different ages, Yang-style Tai Chi could function to build body and relieve diseases. With the development of social society, in addition to being a fitness exercise conforming to physiological and athletic principles, Yang-style Tai Chi also serves as an effective method to treat and rehabilitate from some diseases.

## 1. Introduction

As an important component of traditional Chinese culture, Tai Chi is fairly popular at home and greatly acknowledged abroad, and there are large numbers of people playing it and it is even applied in patients' rehabilitation [1]. The relevant data show that at present Tai Chi has its role in more than 150 countries and regions with a population of about 150,000,000 worldwide practicing it and a number of more than 80 countries and regions owning their Tai Chi Associations [2]. It has been proved that Yang-style Tai Chi could help players get rid of roughness in mind, exhale the oppressed energy, cultivate morale, stabilize sentiments, increase internal curiosity, benefit intelligence development and build up body. This paper studies Yang-style Tai Chi to publicize its fitness value and thus play a positive role in promoting Chinese martial arts and inheriting traditional Chinese culture.

## 2. Origin and development

Yang-style Tai Chi was created by Yang Luchan from Yongnian County, Hebei Province based on the boxing techniques of Chen-style Tai Chi. Yang Luchan visited the village of Chenjiagou for three times in order to learn from Chen Changxing and then came back to his hometown to teach Tai Chi. The softness of his boxing entitled it with the name "Cotton Boxing". During Xianfeng and Tongzhi period in the Qing Dynasty, the teacher of Guangxu pointed out after appreciating Yang's performance, "Shaped like a monkey, Chen Luchan could illustrate the state of Tai Chi of one harmonious whole", and also he praised Yang with the verse, "The world is struck by Yang's extraordinary performance, and the elites are eclipsed by Yang's unparalleled techniques." After the study and inheritance by nine generations of Yang's descendants for more than 100 years, in the late Qing Dynasty, Tai Chi was introduced from the countryside of Guangfu Town, Yongnian County, Hebei Province to Beijing and its surrounded areas, and during the period of the Republic of China it was spread to Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Guangzhou, etc., thus influencing different-level players of Yang-style Tai Chi in society [3].

The development of Yang-style Tai Chi is favorable, and being now practiced and shared by people both at home and abroad, it has become a significant method to build body and keep fit.

### 3. Style characteristics of Yang-style Tai Chi

Among the various boxing arts in China, the most uniquely outstanding and specially conceived one is Yang-style Tai Chi. Gently, softly and slowly, it moves like a silkworm reeling off raw silk from cocoons, flowing in an arching, stretching, flexible way and achieving the harmony and balance between stillness and motion[4]. The combination of yin and yang and the connotation of philosophy in Yang-style Tai Chi are associated with the rhythm of life and the integration of spiritual activities and physical movements, which is pursued by traditional Chinese aesthetics and western modern aesthetics.

**Catlike stepping.** The movements of Yang-style require to be loosely heavy when stepping upward and to be lightly steady when stepping onward, lifting up and setting down gently and making no sound. Accordingly, the practice of footing is of great significance. For example, before move forward a foot, relax the corresponding leg and crotch; lift the foot gently, touch the ground with your heel, then put the sole of the foot onto the ground, relax your waist and move your weight forward. In the process, your whole body should keep in a balanced and upright state and no undulation of your body is allowed.

**Balanced and upright body.** Keeping your body balanced and upright is the first point when practicing Yang-style Tai Chi. Being balanced and upright means that your body should not lean forward or backward, and you should keep your coccyx and your back on the vertical line, your hip joint sinking down and your whole body balanced and vertical. “Balanced and upright coccyx” involved in boxing classics means that maintain the weight on the lower part of body, otherwise your strength could be easily leveraged by your opponent to defeat you. Thus, you should be spiritually steady and mentally tranquil as well as physically upright on back, loose on waist and sinking on hip to jointly achieve the state of being balanced and upright.

**Integration of mind and body.** Yang-style Tai Chi attaches great importance to generating power inside and rotating with waist as the spindle, with its movements gentle and smooth, steady but not hindered, quick but not floating, continually flowing with relentless spirit. In the process of playing Tai Chi, your consciousness is rather important as it serves to connect different movements. “Consciousness is the governor while the body is its subjects” in boxing classics refers to the domination of consciousness. When playing Yang-style Tai Chi, you should relax your body, dominate your body with your mind and generate your vital, and as days pass, the strength accumulates within your body and makes you powerful.

### 4. Fitness value

**Improve circulatory system and prevent osteoporosis.** Composed of different movements with the characteristics of rigidness, softness, virtual, real, etc. which focus on different muscle and joint groups, breathing and diaphragm, Yang-style Tai Chi could help to activate the circulation of blood, dredge the blood congestion in human body and thus improve circulatory system and cardiac function. Frequent exercises of Yang-style Tai Chi would help to unchoke internal vital energy, relax body, upgrade the microcirculatory system, accelerate the exchange of substances inside and outside capillary vessels, relieve the sense of tiredness, recover from diseases, especially in the prevention and treatment of chronic coronary disease, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, heart disease, lung disease and dizziness.

Tai Chi is also beneficial to bones, muscles and joints as involving “lifting up back and chest and lowering shoulders and arms”, throwing a punch in Tai Chi could work positively for spinal structure and forms. In this way, the internal organs of the body, muscles and ligaments could be activated for more movements to make the bones more sustainable, the ligaments more flexible, the muscles more strong, promoting the absorption of calcium and improving the breaking-resistant strength of bones. Thus, those who regularly play Yang-style Tai Chi would be more resistant to bone fracture.

**Build body and shape figure.** As a kind of aerobic exercise, Yang-style Tai Chi enjoys its own unique movements which could accelerate the decomposition of calories, sugar and protein, improve

metabolism, promote the the blood circulation within body, make skin smooth, fine, watery and flexible, adjust the metabolism of sebum and endocrine system, ameliorate the circulation of vital and blood and keep people's skin rosy and transparent. Also, it could speed up the decomposition and consumption of calories and help to keep average figure. Calories are the important substances in human body to provide energy for exercises. However, long-term practice of Yang-style Tai Chi in a condition of the supply of enough oxygen would require more energies that only sugar could not afford at the late period, and then calories would be consumed more and more which could account for 70%-90% of the total consumed energies. When the consumption of calories is greater and greater, the purpose of losing weight and shaping figure is achieved.

**Cultivate virtue and character.** Cultivating virtue and character refers to the cultivation of mind and moral, such as ethic value and benevolence. Yang-style Tai Chi advocates both physical exercise as well as moral cultivation whose core value is wholeheartedness. Wholeheartedness could help people to keep a mental, organic and physiological balance. When a person gets spiritually settled and mentally stable, his or her internal organs would be adjusted and nourished to function orderly and normally and thus make healthy body. Regular exercise of Yang-style Tai Chi could benefit the state of mental tranquility, coordinate yin and yang of body, expel and prevent diseases, serving as a good method to cultivate virtue and character and keep healthy and long life.

## 5. Conclusion

As a distinguished athletic practice in traditional Chinese culture, Yang-style Tai Chi is to the benefit of people's physical and mental health through strengthening physique, preventing diseases, cultivating morals and fostering character. Full of appeals, its movements are generous in stretching, combine rigidity and softness; simple, unique, elegant, the boxing style could make players comfortable and enjoyable even after several repeats and satisfy the needs of people in different genders and at different ages for exercising and building body as well as preventing diseases.

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