
The Progress Of Physical Education And Sport In India Till 1947

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Abstract

From the dawn of humankind to around 10,000 BC, men had a constant voice in the back of their head saying, “Run for your life!” Physical development followed a natural path that was determined by the practical demands of life in a wild landscape as well as the vital need to avoid threats and seize opportunities for survival. Starting between 10,000 and 8,000 BC, the Agricultural Revolution is often considered to be the dawn of civilization. Man’s transition from nomadic hunter-gatherer to farmer led to dramatic changes in his physical activity. The numerous demands of growing food and raising cattle meant a lot of chores and a lot of daily labor for farmers. But these tasks were largely repetitive, and required a very limited range of movement. At the same time, the need for performing a variety of complex movements — running, balancing, jumping, crawling, and climbing— greatly diminished. Such movements were rarely performed in a farm environment, or were performed in much simpler ways; for example, climbing a ladder is safer and more constrained and predictable than climbing trees. Ancient military training had similarities to the movements performed in nature by our cavemen brethren, but with more structure and a different end goal. Young men practiced fundamental skills such as walking and running on uneven terrains, jumping, crawling, climbing, lifting and carrying heavy things, throwing and catching, unarmed fighting, and weapons training. The great Epic the ‘**Ramayana**’ and the ‘**Mahabharata**’ are full of stories of great warrior depicting their martial qualities. If you just look into the epics we can well understand that physical fitness was considered as an important factor in all warfare and it was prompted by indigenous system of physical education. All war weapons and war tactics were also of indigenous nature. The warriors were well versed in archery, wrestling, sword fighting, horse riding, elephant riding and Chariot racing. Taxila University is an example, where training of archery (Dhanurvedya) was of a very high order. From survival in ancient period as basic objective behind physical education, all-round development of individual has become the motto of physical education. However, this transition in the outlook and objective of physical education from ancient to modern through medieval period has traversed various stages of growth.

Keywords: Physical Education, Development and Civilization..

Introduction

From the dawn of humankind to around 10,000 BC, men had a constant voice in the back of their head saying, “Run for your life!” Physical development followed a natural path that was determined by the practical demands of life in a wild landscape as well as the vital need to avoid threats and seize opportunities for survival. One’s movement demands consisted of locomotion, the manipulation of tools and natural objects (rocks, tree limbs, etc.), and defense. To survive in a harsh environment full of natural and human obstacles and enemies, early man had to know not only how to run, but also walk, balance, jump, crawl, climb, lift, carry, throw and catch things, and fight. We can also safely assume that playful or creative moves like early forms of dancing were performed when bellies were full and predators weren’t around.

The strength and mobility of early man was not developed through structured programs, methods, or schedules, but rather was forged by the daily, instinctive, necessity-driven practice of highly practical and adaptable movement skills. Today, the few hunter-gatherer tribes which still exist around the world would have no idea what “primal fitness” or a “caveman workout” is, as this kind of “exercise” remains deeply ingrained in their everyday lives. Starting between 10,000 and 8,000 BC, the Agricultural Revolution is often considered to be the dawn of civilization. Man’s transition from nomadic hunter-gatherer to farmer led to dramatic changes in his physical activity. The numerous demands of growing food and raising cattle meant a lot of chores and a lot of daily labor for farmers. But these tasks were largely repetitive, and required a very limited range of movement. At the same time, the need for performing a variety of complex movements — running, balancing, jumping, crawling, and climbing— greatly diminished. Such movements were rarely performed in a farm environment, or were performed in much simpler ways; for example, climbing a ladder is safer and more constrained and predictable than climbing trees.

Ancient military training had similarities to the movements performed in nature by our cavemen brethren, but with more structure and a different end goal. Young men practiced fundamental skills such as walking and running on uneven terrains, jumping, crawling, climbing, lifting and carrying heavy things, throwing and catching, unarmed fighting, and weapons training.

Civilized populations valued physical culture for sports as well. Records of athletic competitions exist from ancient Egypt, and of course, the ancient Greeks famously created the first Olympic Games. Not surprisingly, these early sports were all based on practical, natural movement skills and were fundamentally related to the preparedness needed for war — the Greeks strove to best each other in

running (sometimes with armor and shield), jumping, throwing (javelin or discus), and fighting (striking and wrestling).

In the physical culture of India, the age old was advocated that non violence is the best of righteous acts. This can be realised properly in its true spirit only by a strong individual and not by weak ones, because physical weakness may be attributed to cowardice. Further, protection is well assured only by powerful one. Moreover the great poet **Kalidas** has emphasised that physic is the lease indeed for accomplishment of duty. **Vedas** have emphasised that just as wealth is essential for the appropriate fulfilment of desire, similarly for the salvation of life healthy physic is essential.

The great Epic the '**Ramayana**' and the '**Mahabharata**' are full of stories of great warrior depicting there martial qualities. If you just look into the epics we can well understand that physical fitness was considered as an important factor in all warfare and it was prompted by indigenous system of physical education. All war weapons and war tactics were also of indigenous nature. The warriors were well versed in archery, wrestling, sword fighting, horse riding, elephant riding and Chariot racing. Taxila University is an example, where training of archery (Dhanurveda) was of a very high order.

"Begun as exciting games, dances and hunting in ancient times, the domain of physical education of modern times has become time-tested and well-established field aiming at physical, mental, social and psychological development of an individual. From survival in ancient period as basic objective behind physical education, all-round development of individual has become the motto of physical education. However, this transition in the outlook and objective of physical education from ancient to modern through medieval period has traversed various stages of growth in India as mention below:

Indus Valley Civilization Period (3250 BC – 2500 BC)

During this age the objective of physical exercise was achieved through a daily routine of work, games, sports and amusement. Dancing, particularly community dancing, was the favourite recreation of Pre Vedic people as it appears from a bronze dancing girl from Mohanjodaro in the national Museum in Delhi. the most important and interesting things during the Indus Valley Civilization at Mohanjodaro was the Grcort Bath, which was similar to modern swimming pool. Marbles, balls and dice were used for games. Dicing was a very popular game as it would be evident from a large number of dices unearthed. Both cubicle and tubular specimens have been found. It is, however not certain whether the throwing of dice constituted a game in itself. Most probably dices were used along with board games. Two incomplete specimen of game board have been found. Animal fighting was another part time during this civilization. Boxing was also in practice as evident from seal found.

Vedic Period (2500 BC – 1000 BC)

Surya Namaskar the origin of which dates back to Vedic period was performed more as a religious duty then today a mere physical exercise or training. Military training was also popular during this period, because Aryans were engaged in subjugating non-Aryans and stabilizing their supremacy. As it demanded physical strength, vigour and martial skills they were involved in hand wrestling, use of bow and arrow, dagger fight, sword fight, mace fight, hurling the discus and spear. Horse riding, chariot racing, hunting, elephant riding and boxing were also needed in battle. Hunting as a sport was also prevalent. Music and dancing was well known. Birds and animal fighting was also popular pastime. Fights were organised in the fair and festival for amusement. Great emphasis was placed on the culture of Physics and strength during the Vedic period. Physical strength was emphasised greater than academic learning. Practice of yoga was recommended for the development of spiritual strength.

Epic Period (1000 BC - 600BC)

The exploits of the Indians of this period can be gathered from the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata', which were composed during this period. Both epics reveal that this period was a period of great turmoil and wars. Dicing and chess were popular games. The game of chess was in fact the invention of some Hindu and this country is considered the original home of this game which spread throughout the ancient world. Physical education as one of the compulsory items. Archery, Javelin throwing, sword fighting, club fighting, wrestling, horse riding and chariot racing have been elaborately described in these books.

There were no separate teachers for physical education; but the knowledge of arms and armaments was given by the same teachers who were well versed in scriptural studies too. There used to be Gurukuls (Schools) where pupils lived a celebrate life up to the age of 25 years and learnt all physical activities along with mental education. The names of such warriors of this periods as Ram, Laxman, Ravan, Megghanatha, Bhima, Arjuna, Kama, Bhisma, Drona etc. have become immortal for their valour.

Early Hindu Period (600 BC - 320 AD)

The ancient religion of the Hindus had its first jolt in this period. There was a great revolt against the existing social disparities, rigid caste system, the Brahmanical dominance and orthodox acceptance of the scriptural authority. There was general discontentment among the masses against the tyrannical dominance of the priestly class. This spiritual awakening gave birth to two great religions namely 'Jainism' and 'Buddhism'. These religions were religions of peace and non-violence. Yet due emphasis was also given to physical training. Meghasthenes who visited India during the period of Chandragupta Maurya has referred to a very elaborate system of physical training for the army. Vipassana, a meditation technique was very popular, commonly used to understand oneself. Wrestling, sword fighting, Javelin

throwing, horse racing etc. were very common sports in those days. Training in the art of war was both intensive and extensive.

Later Hindu Period (320 AD – 1000 AD)

Great universities like **Taxila and Nalanda** developed during this period. There was a happy correlation of the physical, intellectual and aesthetic training at these centres of learning. Wrestling, archery, and mountain climbing were given special attention. At Nalanda University swimming, breathing exercises and yoga formed an essential part of the daily life of the student.

During this period physical education was greatly patronized by the Gupta rulers, people followed the glorious example set by their brave rulers and participated in mainly sports and physical activities. During this period hunting was very popular past time of the people. There were 31 ways of hunting known to the people. Elephant, buffalo and partridge fighting was also in existence. Great emphasis was laid on the maintenance of sound health and physical fitness which was achieved through regular habit, regular diet, long walking, physical labour such as collecting of twigs and filling water etc.

Medieval Period (1000 AD – 1757 AD)

In the 12th century A.D. our system of physical education was prompted in the Gurukuls (place of study where the teacher and taught lived together) by of ancient teachers in the gymnasium which enjoyed the high patronage of king. During the 1200 to 1525 A.D. kings paid more attention toward the military training which resulted in practice of handling different types of weapons for self defence. The well known religious prophets like Shree Samarth Ramdas Swami felt the importance of physical education. He used to practice 1200 Surya namaskar every day. He travels throughout the country and inspire people to build gymnasium with a temple of God Hanuman and to practice namaskar every day. Because of his effort hundreds of gymnasiums were built in the country. Hence he can be rightly called as the ‘Grand Father of Indian Gymnasium Movement’. the physical activities in the gymnasium included Surya namaskars, Dands, Heavy club swinging, Malkhamb, Wrestling, Sword fight etc. the art of Malkhamb was received and a new type of Malkhamb known as hanging Malkhamb and care Malkhamb were introduced during this period. Horse riding, javelin throwing, wrestling, hunting, male fighting and above all archery were extremely popular sports with the Rajput. Later on the **Mughals** gained supremacy over the entire subcontinent. The physical education continued to play an important role in the life of courtiers and soldiers. Hunting, sword fighting, mace fighting, and horse riding were preferred to yogic exercises, because physical activity leading to acquisition of war skills was an important aspect of the life of these people. The Mughals were great patrons of wrestling as it served dual purpose as a recreational games as well as suitable actually for war preparedness. They encourage

the wrestling school and even kept restless in their courts. Often dands and baithaks were used to develop muscular power and elasticity. Massaging was an extremely important aspect of wrestling training. Boxing was another notable activity. Hunting, swimming, and animal fights were other activities which was popular during this period.

British period (Till 1947)

After 1825 A.D. the inter system of physical education rapidly deteriorated to the unexpected levels. The event of daily life started moving just an opposite direction to the previous period in the strong grip of British ruler.

During this period the Western Civilization influenced the Indian Culture with the result that the youngest developed an aversion toward the indigenous activities and kept themselves away from Akharas/ Vyayamhala. The main reason for this change were: - (1) The activities introduced by the foreigners were more attractive (2) games had more recreational values than indigenous activities (3) the Westin activities were of group type where more people could participate with laser skill as compared to indigenous once (4) the indigenous physical activities were not an essential part of the school curriculum. The public schools which followed the elite British system of education had some arrangements of compulsory physical education. In this is school greater attention was paid to the western types of games and sports and not to indigenous activities. Track and field, swimming, horse riding, horse Polo, cycle Polo etc. were popular in the school. The organised scientific physical education came to India in 1920 when Mr H.C. Buck founded the Y.M.C.A. College of Physical Education at Madras. This institution gave a form foot hold to physical education in India. Later on many more Institutions came into exist. The teachers passing from these institutions replaced ex-army personals and gradually lent to new meaning to physical education programme in school and community. In order to make the indigenous activity is more attractive the Hanuman Vyayam Prasarak Mandal, Amravati was formed. The H.V.P. Mandal offered number of courses life certificate course, diploma and degree courses in physical education. It was also the first institution to start demonstration-cum-propaganda tour to propagate the cause of indigenous physical education all over India and abroad.

With the achievement of independence in 1947, India made rapid progress in all aspects. For the development of physical education and Recreation, numbers of schemes floated by the Government of India. The first central Government Physical Education Committee called as Tara Chand Committee was set up in the year 1948. To promote and popularise indigenous physical activity a National Plan of Physical Education and Recreation was prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Physical Education in the year 1956. The Ministry of Education established College of Physical Education at Gwalior, MP in 1957 offering 3 year degree course. Latter on Master's degree course of 2 years duration was

introduced in the same college. In 1982 Asian games were conducted in India; it was a great step towards promotion of physical education and sports in our country. For hosting this games huge infrastructure were built and sports industries were encouraged to manufacture sports goods of top quality.

For the promotion of Physical Education and sports, many committees has been formed and some are under the consideration of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports under the dynamic leadership of Union Minister of Sports. Hoping the new one will have the special significance, unique role and will make unlimited contribution in the modern age as it caters to the biological, sociological and psychological necessities of the man.

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