



EARLIEST TRACES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ITS EVOLUTION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life style, and with a lower risk of heart diseases, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and most of all obesity. Despite all the benefits of physical activity, most school-aged children in this country are inactive. Lack of physical activity has also contributed to a sharp increase in childhood obesity in the last decade. Given the fact that the regular physical activity will help younger people stay healthier, and is an essential component of childhood development, it is important that this is to be included as a part of the regular school curriculum. This work aims to discuss the history of Physical education in Indian context.

KEYWORDS : Physical Activity, Physical Education, Physical Literacy, Physical Development, Children And Sports.

Introduction:

Physical education has existed since the earliest stages of human society, in forms as simple as the transmission of basic survival skills, such as hunting. Later, the ancient Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian civilizations had traditions of physical education and activity, most commonly acted out in sporting competitions, military tactics and training, and martial arts. Physical education is often given a secondary place in the educational services of our schools, but we all know that it is an essential component of childhood development and should help to build a solid foundation for a healthy adult life. By eliminating physical education from the school, when student becomes an adult could experience obesity, or other health problems. It is very important to have an active life style at younger age, so it becomes secondary in nature.

History of Physical Education in India:

Sports or physical activity developed as a natural activity for an Indian, as it was the case with any other human being world over. The earliest evidence about sporting activity has been found in the Indus Valley civilization, dating back to 2500 B.C (Wheeler 1972). The people of this period were health conscious and had swimming pools and indulged in water sports. Hunting and bull fighting were popular sports and people during that period engaged themselves in different types of recreational activities using cubical dice, tabular dice, costing sticks, round ivory rods, balls made of harder stone, game boards made of wood and brick.

Contributions of Aryans to Physical Education:

The migration of Aryans gave a new dimension to physical education in India. Their system of education was a holistic one, wherein stress was on the complete development of the individual. They gave equal importance to spiritual, intellectual and physical development of each and every Aryan. Radha Kumud Mukherjee observed that, the growth of the whole nature of the boy, and not the growth of his intellect merely, was the objective of this ancient pedagogy. The prime objective of the schools was nation building.

Their aim was not to produce mere scholars or recluses but whole men, ideal householders who would perfect the family, society, and country. The need to fight with the native people to ensure their own survival forced the Aryans to concentrate on sports and keep themselves for battle fit race. It was the physical fitness of the Aryans that enabled them to establish their superiority over the local population. The cult of physical education coexisted with religion and metaphysical thinking among the Aryans. Riding, archery, hunting with javelins, fish catching, wrestling, swimming, running, jumping, dancing

and many such similar exercises must have been the different variety of exercises prevailing in those days. Most of the above mentioned events are now a part of present day sport.

Traces of Physical Education from Earliest Literature:

Physical education was known as *Dhanurveda* or *Dhanurveda* or *Kshatradvidya* during Vedic era. The *Chandogya Upanishad* refers to *Kshatradvidya*, as the science of the ruling class. *Kshatradvidya* was not confined to *Kshatriya* class only, but all the four *varnas* of that time were eligible to study *Kshatradvidya*. To quote from *Dhanurveda Samhita*, attributed to *Vasishtha*, an *Upanayana* ceremony had to be performed by a military student who was given a weapon, while a Vedic hymn was uttered by the preceptor. In the case of a *Brahmana* student it was a bow, for a *Kshatriya* a sword, for a *Vaisya* a lance, and for a *Shudra*, a mace.

The Epic Mahabharata carries sufficient evidence about the existence of sports as an important activity. The *Pandavas* are described as having studied all the Vedas and various treatises (*Shastras*) on deity, etc and emerged into manhood, skilled in studies such as hand to hand fights (*Vyayama*). They are proficient and achieved mastery in archery (*Dhanurveda*), in club-fights, in wielding of sword and shields and other arts of fighting.

Traces of Physical Education from Yoga:

Yoga is an important method to keep a person both physically and psychologically fit. Its origins can be traced to Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeologist found some plates with men in sitting postures and concluded that those postures were yoga postures. Later, in the post Vedic times the practice of yoga was developed into a formal system with its own textbook the yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The system implies the following eight members (*angas*) or external practices; (1) *Yama*: Discipline (consisting in abstinence from doing injury, truthfulness, honesty, chastity, poverty); (2) *Niyama*: self-restraint (purity, contentment, asceticism, study and devotion); (3) *Asana*: sitting (in the right place and in the correct bodily attitude or posture); (4) *Pranayama*: Regulation of the breath; (5) *Pratyahara*: suppression (of the organs of sense); (6) *Dharana*: Concentration of the attention; (7) *Dhytanam*: meditation; (8) *Samadhi*: Absorption.

Yoga describes the measures by which the ascent of man can be achieved. It begins with making the organs of knowledge and action abandons their operations so as to free the mind from the clutches of matter (*Yoga-schitta-viritti-nirodhah*). The idea is that such inhibition closes the avenue of the sense and, therefore, empties the mind of its content of all sensory

experience.

Brief History of Physical Education:

A brief history of physical education in the United States would kick off in the nineteenth century. There was growing popularity for formal physical education programs all across the Europe where calisthenics and gymnastics were all the range. American schools looked to follow the European model by incorporating physical education into the curriculum for primary and secondary schools. And a brief history of physical education would not be complete with a consideration of institutes of higher education that gradually built up extremely successful sports programs.

The brief history of physical education would start in just about 1820 when schools focused on gymnastics, hygiene training and health care and development of the human body. By the year 1950, over 400 institutes had introduced majors in physical education. The Young Men's Christian Association [YMCA] launched its very first chapter in 1851 and focused on physical activities. Colleges were encouraged to focus on intramural sports particularly track and field events and football.

But physical education became a formal requirement following the civil war when many states opted to pass laws that required schools to incorporate a substantial physical education component into their curriculums. But it was not till 1970 that an amendment was made to the Federal Education Act that allowed women from high schools and colleges to compete in athletic competitions. Sex-based discrimination was completely outlawed from government funded programs at this point.

Decline in Physical Education:

But this is not meant to imply that the history of physical education has been all rosy. Late in the twentieth century there was certainly a decline in the commitment to physical education. The growing offering of extra subjects and electives in schools means that the shift was focusing away from physical education and towards academics. The country also faced a recession around 1970 and 1980 and the dearth of government funding means that physical education programs were often the first to be cut from schools and universities.

The modern Age:

But recent awareness of the need for balanced curriculums particularly given the national concern over the state of obesity and children's attention towards non-physical activities like video games has brought physical education back in to the spotlight. The government has re-signalled its commitment to physical education by making it as a mandatory in public schools in early classes but it remains an elective at the high school level. One of the most interesting developments in the history of physical education has been how the definition of physical education has evolved. While it only encompassed traditional sports in the beginning, it now includes several less physical activities such as yoga and meditation which are considered critical to helping students develop a sense of control in such a stressful age.

Physical Education as a Discipline:

As a discipline, it is eclectic in nature. It has borrowed the ideas and concepts from various disciplines and integrated them to a unified frame work. The eclectic nature of the physical education is depicted. Both in theory and practice, physical education derives its principles of anthropology, biology, physiology, psychology, physics, chemistry, mechanics etc, provided sound bases for the development of principles, practices, teaching and training methodologies of physical education and sports.

In fact, physical education is an interdisciplinary approach to the solution of problems of health, fitness, performance and recreation. With the harnessing of scientific knowledge, even fundamental concepts in physical education have undergone radical change. The archaic physical training constituting only drills and skills has been discarded. Instead a new approach to the achievement of such objectives of physical fitness, personality development, recreation etc., has crystallized. Physical education is now a scientific discipline with much wider and varied subjects like Dance, Recreation, Athletics, Human Ecology, Human Engineering, Sport Medicine, Kinesiology [Movement Education] and Physical Therapy.

Essential aims and objectives of Physical Education:

(i) To develop the organic systems of the body; It is recognized that our feelings, emotions, thoughts and achievements are influenced to a considerable extent by the physiological process of the body. The development of the organic vigour is dependent on a wide selection of activities and so conducted that the normal functions of the body are developed and improved.

(ii) To develop neuro-muscular co-ordination or skill; A good deal of physical activities helps the individuals and groups to develop certain skill, which gives satisfaction and happiness in a variety of ways during leisure times. Being physically illiterate many people do not know how to enjoy their leisure and become unhappy and maladjusted. Individual and group play activities enable people to give wholesome expression to their innate desires and interests,

(iii) To develop right attitude towards and physical activities in general; Programme of physical education is based on sound psychological principles. It develops amongst the individuals wholesome attitudes towards play and physical activities and cultivates recreational and hobbies.

(iv) To develop a desirable social attitudes and conduct; By giving emphasis on ethical values inherent in Playing games with and against others the desirable social attitudes and conduct can be developed through a programme of well organized physical activities. It gives opportunity for social contact, group living, and self adjustment with the group.

(v) Development of psychomotor skills;

(vi) Development of understanding and appreciation of the techniques and strategies of sports;

(vii) Preparation for leisure time;

(viii) Elimination of worries and anxieties through developing appropriate interests and habits of engaging in exercise and sports;

(ix) Attainment of knowledge of proper health procedure as related to physical exercise.

(x) To develop correct health habits; A rational programme of physical activities can stimulate the participant to develop favourable attitudes and habits in physical, mental, moral, social and emotional health.

(xi) To serve as an out let for surplus energy, which if not spent up, make the child tensed, nervous and irritable.

(xii) To meet the challenge of growing indiscipline among the student community by instilling in the younger generation a sense of patriotism, self-reliance and discipline.

(xiii) To give adequate scope for bringing out the aptitudes

and talents of the child.

7. <https://www.preservearticles.com/education/aims-and-objectives-of-physical-education/5158>.

(xiv) To promote the spirit of certain qualities like sports-man ship, team spirit, leadership, patience, self-restrain, co-operation, sociability and those other qualities of character and citizenship.

Physical Education Personal Views:

Physical education is given much priority in all most all the developed countries. India also giving priority to physical education but in different way it has been presented in the schools. when we look back in to our education system, physical education left behind the curriculum leaving the message that the physical education stamped as extra-curriculum that too twice in a week for the name sake leaving the main essence of the physical education .Even today physical education or physical Literacy and physical education teachers are treated as an obstacle for the education in the process of achieving the top scores and ranks, today the ultimate goal of education is to reach top in ranks ,leaving the majority of the students to their fate.

The education department never like to review the academic system in schools and they never dare to change to the realities coping to needs of the modern society. After all our education system may produce an intellectual citizens but not the morally, socially responsible and healthy citizens to run the society with balance in all aspects. Our education system has been neglecting the physical education and stamped as an extracurricular and it is termed as an unwanted subject in the schools, more over physical education teachers are restricted just to look after the discipline.

The system must change and the education system must take a big step to look in to the nature of the subject and its effects on the students in long run. We have been observing the education system as a whole but not in particular. For example we have various types of teacher education systems and levels. Does anyone examined teacher education training system, its duration, the subjects taught to them, again partiality among the subjects, we give high priority to maths and science subjects and the last place to physical education in it. Why, you may justify the subject weightage to maths and science to some extent based on the nature of the subjects. You please apply the same principle to physical education also because they are studying all most all subjects, along with physical literacy, physical science for sports movements, life sciences like Anatomy, physiology, kinesiology etc of course mathematics for calculating measurements also.

Conclusion:

Physical Education in India is probably as old as civilization itself. Physical Education plays a vital role in total educational process as it helps to develop the integrated personality of the pupil, which in turn helps to produce good citizens, who are physically, mentally, emotionally and socially competent. It is an integral part of the education system that aims at building a sound body, wholesome personality, good health and a sharp mind. It is essential for the development and cultivation of values such as vitality, courage, self-confidence co-operative nature, leadership, obedience and positive attitude towards life and the world.

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