

PHYSICAL EDUCATION
AND
RECREATION
By
P. M. JOSEPH .

ASIAN RELATIONS
CONFERENCE

March—April 1947

PHYSICAL EDUCATION
AND RECREATION

by

P. M. Joseph

GROUP C: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL SERVICES
TOPIC VI: LABOUR PROBLEMS & SOCIAL SERVICES

INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS
NEW DELHI

P. M. JOSEPH is Principal of the Government Training Institute for Physical Education, Bombay, and Secretary, Bombay Board of Physical Education; is particularly interested in the problem of recreation for the adult population; has made a special study of physical education in USA and toured USA, Europe and India to study the problem of physical education and recreation.

*This paper has been submitted to the Asian Relations Conference by the author.
The author alone is responsible for statements of fact or opinion in this paper.*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION FOR NATIONAL HEALTH

Good heredity, health and sanitary surroundings, adequate diet, wholesome exercise, and proper medical care are the foundations of good health. Health, in the minds of most people, is considered merely as freedom from disease. A great many people are living below their best level of attainment. Many believe they are healthy because they are not sick. Health is a positive quality. It is that condition of the individual that makes possible happiness and enjoyment in life, and shows itself in the best service to the world. It involves keeping one's body and mind at the highest levels, living at one's best and not being satisfied by mere absence from the sick-room. Dr. J. F. Williams of Columbia University defines health as 'the quality of life that renders the individual to live most and to serve best'. This definition of health should draw the attention of all those who seek merely the liberation of man from disease, physical weakness and inefficiency. Living at one's best is more than this. For such a life physical vigour is fundamental. The body must be so developed that it will become the temple of the soul, and will be a servant ready and trained to serve high cause and noble ends. 'Health as mere freedom from disease is a standard of mediocrity; health as a quality of life is a standard of inspiration and increasing achievements.'

Benefits of Exercise

Play and other forms of planned physical activities are essential for attaining optimum health. Heredity will do its part as a foundation; food, air and sunlight are necessary; preventive hygiene must be practised to keep off disease and remove defects. Yet, after all is said and done, it is activity that stimulates growth and development. Inactivity means inefficiency; in the case of muscles it leads to deterioration and even atrophy.

Muscles are directly developed both in size and quality by exercise. Development of certain groups of muscles, particularly those of the trunk and abdomen are of importance for maintaining satisfactory health. Good posture and strong agile body are assets of great value whether in war or in peace.

Exercises have an even greater contribution to make in the development and efficient functioning of the vital organs of the body. Heart and circulation, respiration, digestion, excretion and some of the functions of the nervous system are all beneficially influenced by exercise.

Physical Education

The term 'Exercise' conveys the idea of artificial movements such as raising and lowering the arms, and bending and twisting the trunk. If faithfully and regularly done, well selected exercises such as the 'daily dozen' can help to keep one fit. But such artificial movements are dull and unappealing and very few take to it with real interest or keep it up for any length of time. Man's physical activities should not be confined to these artificial movements. Natural and racially old activities such as, walking, running, climbing, hanging, throwing and lifting

are more appealing and more beneficial. Any programme recommended for an institution or a country should include and emphasise these activities. Terms such as exercises, physical training, sports, etc. are too narrow in scope and conception. The term 'Physical Education' is now adopted not only to include the many varieties of physical activities, but also to emphasise the educational aspects of physical activities. In this wide and significant sense physical education is defined as the sum total of man's big muscle activities conducted for beneficial outcomes. Included among such activities are games, sports, gymnastic exercises, folk-dances and a variety of other physical activities which will enable a person to get fit and to keep fit. Physical Education is interested in the development of the whole man, and when rightly conceived, is appreciative of its opportunities for the development of desirable mental, moral, and social qualities. As we consider it, in the present problem of national health, its primary concern is big muscle activity which will lead to organic health and muscular development.

Conditions in India

In planning a programme of physical education and recreation for the country, there are some important factors peculiar to India to be kept in mind.

(1) India's population is mainly in rural areas, and is scattered over lakhs of villages, some of them large, some of them very small. There are also many large cities and towns and there is a growing movement of large numbers to such urban areas. Recreation for the rural as well as urban needs must be provided.

(2) Economically, the country as a whole is poor. There are great divergencies in wealth. There are many who are rich and can afford to spend large amounts in recreations of any kind. For them, whatever is attractive and popular can be provided without great considerations regarding cost. Such people are, however, only a few. For a few thousand rich and a few lakhs of middle class people there are millions who are poor. A nation wide programme should provide for the poor as well as those who are well off.

(3) Conservatism and too much faith in old traditions, prejudice people against anything new. Illiteracy and lack of education will be stumbling blocks in introducing a new plan of recreation, just as it always has been in popularising anything new. Purdha, social disabilities and inequalities, heavy domestic burden, etc., are factors which will probably militate against recreation reaching the women of the country. In recent years there is a pronounced feeling that play, recreation, enjoyment and laughter are unbecoming and should be tabooed. These are treated as luxuries of the idle and the rich. The poor must sweat and work in sorrow, and the pleasures of this life shall not be their share. Any time, that is not gainfully employed, is wasted time. There is also a growing notion that he who takes care of his body, exercising it and developing it, is no good. Society dubs him as a goonda and a bully.

(4) Undernourishment and malnourishment are chronic, and vast problems in themselves. Strenuous exercises are likely to do harm to a people that is undernourished. By carefully planned programmes which are more recreational than

strenuous even these people can be provided for. Recreation to them would mean happiness, which in turn may make them more efficient, and economically more productive. Those who, however, are in a more fortunate position getting the nourishment they need, can take to healthy vigorous activities that will make them fitter and stronger.

(5) Dependence on aid from outside has become a great weakness with our people. If anything goes wrong people seem to be happy if they can blame Government or some other agency or group other than themselves. The faith in the strength of the community and what it can achieve seems to have vanished from the country. There are very few community projects or undertakings. If anything new is to come it must come from 'above', from somewhere outside. This sense of dependence is a symptom of weakness and stagnation. Organised recreation, if ever to be successful, should become a matter of local concern. Leadership, initiative and support must be from within the village or locality. In the early stages, however, propaganda and organising will have to be undertaken with sufficient outside help.

Existing facilities

Before discussing any new scheme it is desirable to find out what agencies exist at present for promoting games, recreation and physical activities. In Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Colleges physical education is now being promoted in an organised way. In some Provinces compulsory requirements are laid down while in others participation is optional. For the public in urban areas games and recreations are usually organised by private clubs, Gymkhanas and sports organisations. The middle class and the upper class people, who become members of such clubs, get the benefits of the different types of activities promoted there. The poorer classes go without organised recreation, except when provided by industrial employers, welfare organisations or Municipalities. Occasionally, attempts are made by individuals or small groups, even among the poor, to get together for common exercise, singing or other recreation.

Rural India used to have fine traditions of indigenous sport, wrestling, and exercising around an *akhada*. Club swinging, *Lathi* practice, various vigorous games, folk-dances were very common. In recent times there has been a considerable set-back in these fine activities. While it is still possible to meet old people who speak of the fun and combats of their young days, the present-day youth is generally ignorant of, and indifferent to these traditions. However, in certain provinces, such as Bombay, the Punjab, the United Provinces, etc., many villages have *akhadas* where various kinds of vigorous manly activities, particularly wrestling, are taught and practised. In a few cases, due to poor leadership and guidance, some of these centres do not possess a good reputation, and people who go there are thought of as bullies. Right emphasis and proper leadership can change such existing prejudices.

Suggested Scheme

No single scheme can be applicable to the whole country. It should vary from province to province, and locality to locality. A broad outline, however, is suggested below.

Physical Education and Recreation in the country must cater to the urban and rural population. The needs of the urban people, their habits and background are such that they would not take enthusiastically to a programme suitable for the villagers, nor can the villagers be expected to respond whole-heartedly to activities and situations which are new and strange to them.

A. URBAN RECREATION

(i) *Private Agencies* : The co-operation of all existing organisations should be sought to promote their activities on a broader and more intensive scale to reach larger numbers. Encouragement should be given to such organisations to start new branches. Organisations such as the YMCA, Boys Scouts Association, Hockey Association, *Vyayam Mandals*, Olympic Association, Ramkrishna Mission, Football Association, Wrestling Federation, Swimming Federation, etc., should be requested and encouraged to extend their activities. Increased facilities in the form of playgrounds, buildings, and maintenance grant may be given as encouragements. The National Playing Fields Association of England provides similar attractions to encourage the starting of new play and recreation centres. The National Recreation Association of USA provides technical guidance and financial assistance to promote organised recreation. In Russia and some other European countries the State provides these facilities with State Funds.

(ii) *Municipalities and Local Bodies* should provide public playgrounds with leadership where the underprivileged and poorer classes can get the benefit of play and recreation. Such Centres should be open for all and no fee of any kind should be charged. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras have Municipal Play Centres. But their number being inadequate they serve only a very small section of the population.

(iii) *Industrial Welfare* : As a part of the welfare work for industrial labourers, all industrial concerns should be required, by legislation, to provide adequate recreational facilities for their labourers. Such centres and their work should be open to Special Recreation Organisers, for inspection, and should be subject to their advice.

B. RURAL AREAS

Greater guidance, facilities and aid for recreation will have to be provided in rural areas. The utility of the existing *akhadas* and other recreative agencies in the villages should be extended. Encouragement should be given to start new centres, if none exist. Every village should be, in course of time, helped to develop its own playground and recreation centres. Special Recreation Organisers, appointed for the purpose, should seek the co-operation of the local people and try to start rural centres. The villagers must be made to feel that the Centre is their own, and should be entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining it as a Village Institution. In the early stages, encouragement may be given with some financial assistance, if this is thought to be advisable. A small group of villagers, a local committee or the village Panchayat may be entrusted with the responsibility of seeing the Centre functioning properly. A young villager, keenly interested in physical activities, may be appointed as the leader of the Centre.

Programme : The programme of activities to be promoted, will depend on the type of people for whom a centre is working. Activities in urban areas are sure to be different from those in rural areas. Even in rural areas the programme will change according to the group, and again, for a group, seasonal changes would demand varied programmes. Facilities available, extent of playgrounds, enthusiasm for certain types of activities, etc. will differ from place to place. Activities can be selected out of a large number that is popular and useful. Wrestling, *Dands*, *Baithaks*, *Lathi*, Weight lifting, Gymnastics, Free Hand Exercises, *Hu-tu-tu* or *Kabaddi*, *Atya-patya*, *Langdi* and other indigenous Games, Cricket, Foot-ball, Hockey, Volley-ball, Basket-ball, Boxing, Net-ball, Playground-ball, Rounders, Indoor games of various kinds, Folk-dances, Group singing, Bhajans, Parties, Dramas, Cinemas, Camping, Hiking, Swimming, Boating, Athletics, etc., are a few of the possible activities. In developing any programme, special attention must be given to attract the women of the community to join in the activities.

Organisation : In countries where dictatorial Governments exist, recreation has been mainly the concern of the State. Physical activities were thought not so much in terms of health and happiness, but in terms of physical fitness and preparedness for war. In democratic countries such as England and the United States of America, recreation has been promoted more by voluntary agencies. In Italy it was a case of 'every one must' ; in America it was a case of 'here are the facilities won't you come and join' ? In India the Physical Education and Recreation Movement cannot be left entirely in the hands of voluntary agencies. Government Planning, Government guidance and Government aid must be provided. Every encouragement should be given to well established organisations and new enterprises to plan and promote recreation. Advice and technical assistance, through a Government agency, specially appointed for the purpose, should be given to these voluntary organisations.

Where there are no Associations to take up such work at the beginning, Government or the Local Body should start centres. Such centres except in rare cases, are best handed over to some local agency, already existing or newly formed.

In short, Recreation in the country should be under the guidance of Government, but the responsibility of conducting recreation centres, playgrounds, etc., should be entrusted to voluntary bodies and specially formed non-official agencies.

Government Machinery : For drawing up and laying down policies, to give advice, to encourage the establishment of play centres, and generally look after the Physical Education and Recreation Movement in the country, a special Department called the 'Department of Physical Education and Recreation' should be established at the Centre as well as in all the Provinces. All States should also be encouraged to take a similar step. This department should have specially trained and qualified men and women appointed on the Staff. These people will act as promoters and organisers of recreation, visiting places where their help is required and rendering help and advice. The Headquarters at the centre will function to co-ordinate Physical Education in the country as a whole, receiving information, compiling statistics, laying down policies, keeping up contact with recreation movements in

other countries, making new experiments, etc. In each Province there should be a Provincial organiser working under a new Department of Recreation or under one of the existing Departments such as the Department of Health or Education. The Provincial organiser should have under him District organisers to be in close contact with the work going on locally. Details of relationship between these organisers and Associations conducting play centres can be worked out in due course.

Training of Workers : If this scheme or something similar to this is undertaken by the Government it will be necessary to have trained leaders, in large numbers. Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, Lucknow, Lahore and Hyderabad have at present, Colleges of Physical Education. The emphasis in most of these Institutions is, at present, on physical education from the school point of view. Necessary modifications which are not many can be made in these centres, to train public recreation workers. Additional new centres, if required, or special training camps can be started to meet the demand for a large number of workers.

Finance : It is difficult to give the details of likely expenditure for a nation-wide scheme of recreation. Government must, however, be prepared to finance such a scheme liberally. Improved health, resulting from active physical exercise, and the accompanying happiness, optimism and efficiency will pay a hundredfold return to any investment in this scheme. Greater national vitality, improved productive power, reduction in illness and misery, improved social intercourse and understanding, can help India to grow into one of the foremost nations of the world.

In the beginning, enough money should be provided to set up organisations at the various Provincial Headquarters to initiate the scheme. As time passes sufficient workers will have to be engaged to promote the work in many places. Grants, which should be liberal in the early stages, should be paid to organisations undertaking the promotion of physical education and recreation. Playgrounds and other facilities should be acquired and provided. If voluntary Associations are not available to undertake the work, Municipalities, and other Local Bodies or Government directly, may have to start such Centres.

In the course of ten years, as the movement grows and as more and more Centres are established expenditure to Government will rise and perhaps reach a maximum. When it is observed that Local Communities have begun to appreciate the benefits of such centres, an attempt should be made to see that these centres are maintained as far as possible by local efforts, local financial contributions, and voluntary workers. The introduction of such a change should be gradual and cautiously undertaken. People must not feel that support is being unfairly withdrawn. Depending upon the enthusiasm and response inspired in the people, it may be possible gradually to do away with Government grants in the course of about fifteen years. However, a directing, advising and supervising agency should be maintained by Government as a permanent establishment.

Approximate figures for the scheme can be worked out if certain details are supplied by the Government.

Conclusion : No National Health Planning can be a complete success without provisions for a national Physical education, physical fitness and recreation movement. The work of medical aid, sanitation and scientific nutrition can be effectively supplemented by a properly promoted programme of physical education. A certain proportion of the nation's financial resources and efforts should be contributed for this very important and constructive work.