Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"Physical fitness is one's richest possession; it cannot be purchased it has to be earned through a daily routine of physical exercise.

In the present days scenario physical fitness is in vogue, and people are becoming more and more health conscious today. It is self evident that the fit citizens are a nation's assets and weak ones its liabilities. It is therefore the responsibility of every country to promote physical fitness of its citizens because physical fitness is the basic requirement for most of the tasks to be undertaken by an individual in his daily life. If a person's body is underdeveloped or grows soft or inactive and if he fails to develop physical process, he is understanding his capacity for thought and for work which are of vital importance to ones own life and society in a welfare state.¹

¹Today, when people are increasingly becoming health conscious inspite of their busy schedules. Government has introduced some fitness schemes like jogging clubs, sponsored races,

neighborhood community centers, national physical fitness festival and mass gymnastics programme (Bhartiyam) were merged with the national fitness programme to make it more interesting and broad based. Not only the government agencies but private organisations also have started floating their funds in these physical fitness programmes, because of the increasing demand and awareness of the people.²

Today different types of scientific and sophisticated health clubs and gymnasiums are running in different cities of India. These health clubs and gymnasium adopt different programmes for different people and charge good amount from the customers for increasing there physical fitness. For some people it has become a status symbol to join a health club or gymnasium.

The concept of physical fitness is not a new one. In the old times Greece was in various kinds of physical activity. The concept of gymnasiums and health clubs is believed to be originated from Greece only. The Athenians broader conception of physical education is best seen in the establishment of public gymnasia. The word gymnasium means 'an exercise for which you strip' 'Gymnastics' signifies the

² Ibid., p.3.
naked art'. The public gymnasia were state institutions managed by high officials and were meant for growing up people. The empheboi also had the privilege of admission. In the beginning these were established for the use of the competitors who trained themselves for the public games.

The gymnasiuim was mainly an athletic ground with enough space for running practice. The site was usually selected near a stream where water was conveniently available. There were large trees which provided plenty of shade, rooms for undressing and separate bathrooms for use after the regular exercise. The wrestling area with all its paraphemalia were known as palestra, and formed a part of the gymnasiuim.

The main difference between a palestra and a gymnasiuim was that the former was essentially a building where as the later only signified an open space for various forms of outdoor physical activities. Where the gymnasiuim did not contain a palestra it was more like a modern sports pavilion where there are changing room and facilities for a shower bath.³

Roman society had elements of luxury. One was the system of baths. Rich people had fine baths in their homes, but most Romans patronised the public baths, which were built by the state and magnificently appointed. Hundreds of salves were employed to maintain these buildings, known as 'therame' meaning hot waters. Nero's bath accommodated 1,600 batters at one time. The decollation bath had enough space for 3000 bathers. The baths were open to the public on payment of nominal fee. All expenses were met by the state. Even oil was supplied free. There were different times for men and for women. In the morning upto 1.00 p.m. women were allowed. From 2.00 p.m. to 8 p.m. the baths were open to men. Some of the emperors allowed mixed bath. The 'therame' also served as a recreation ground. Boxing was popular, there was a palestra for wrestling on open space for running jumping throwing discus and javeline. The internal arrangement of the theramae was elaborate. After sufficient exercise the Romans went in for baths. They first entered the 'trepidation' or warm room, then on the 'caldarium' or hot room for perspiration. Some even went to the 'Laconicum' where the heat was almost unbearable. Then came the proper bath with soap. The whole process was regarded as a safeguard against rheumatism and arthritis. At the
end of the bath olive oil was rubbed well into the body and allowed to remain there for some time. It was then removed with a metal scraper, known as the strigil. In the separate room for massage, which was open to all, slaves in attendance pummeled the fat and gave passive exercise to older people.\(^4\)

During the past century, people in industrialized countries have radically reshaped the environment in which they live. Technical devices of all kinds have assumed on increasing amount of the work formerly performed by muscle power. In most cases changes were for the better, but they have created major problems. One of these problems is that the individual originally designed for hard physical labour in the Stone Age must adapt to a world dominated by technical innovations. Modern men and women must appreciate that regular physical activity is necessary if they are to function properly. Part of the ample spare time that we all enjoy - as compared to previous generations - must be utilized for active reaction.\(^5\)

Many dangers threaten if we do not follow this advice: a reduction in the capacity of certain vital body functions, obesity,

malnutrition, an increased risk of contracting certain diseases, reduced resistance and general fatigue. However we are by nature rather lazy creatures, gamblers who take high risk in the hope that we are the exception to the rule, that everything will work itself out for us in the end. This is why emphasizing the dangers of smoking, alcohol, narcotics and general physical inactivity is seldom effective. People devote more attention to maintaining the good condition of their cars and their pets then to their own health. But it is of vital importance that we should be physically fit in order to manage our daily work and make out leisure time more meaningful. Unfortunately in our society we need only minimal amount of physical activity to get us through average working daily. 6

Even if we want to exercise, the temptation of inactivity are too great. Our automobiles tempt us away from walking, the elevators dissuade us from taking to stairs and most importantly the television takes our interest from other activity that might use up a little energy.

Many scientific studies over the past twenty years support the value of regular exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Studies have documented a sedentary lifestyle as a risk factor for major

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6 Ibid.
degenerative diseases. National health statistics indicate that a high percentage of visits to physicians are for vague complaints such as chronic fatigue. In many cases, the cause of fatigue is the lack of regular physical exercise.

Regular participation in vigorous exercise increases physical fitness. A high level of physical fitness is desirable for a full, productive life. Sedentary living habits and poor physical fitness have a negative impact on both health and daily living.

Regular, vigorous physical activity throughout life significantly reduces the risk of disability, and premature death from stroke and heart disease. It can also effectively alter many of the important risk factors for cardiovascular disease by lowering body weight and total serum cholesterol levels, raising HDL "good" cholesterol, and promoting the maintenance of normal Wood pressure.

The benefits of regular exercise on psychological health have been clearly documented. Patients with anxiety and depression do better if exercise training is combined with other treatments. More importantly, the vast majority of individuals who take up regular
exercise report an improved sense of general well being and an enhanced self-image.

Numerous scientific studies have documented the beneficial effects of exercise in groups of men and women across the entire adult age range. Research has also shown that exercise patterns and fitness levels established during childhood and adolescence are likely to carry over into adult life. Sound exercise habits developed in these early years provide the foundation for a lifetime of physical fitness through exercise.⁷

The national education policy which was established by the government of India in 1985 also gave adequate importance to the programmes of physical education and physical fitness at the institutional level and stipulated that every educational institution should have adequate sports facilities and scientific programmes to enable every school going child to participate in games and sports and fitness activities of his or her choice.

That we are, to a degree, what our muscles make us - weak or strong, vigorous or lethargic - is a growing conviction among medical

⁷ A.K. Uppal, Physical Fitness, How to Develop, p.4.
men offering strong conviction is the following observation by a former president of American Medical Association: "It begins to appear that exercise is the master conditioner for the healthy and the major therapy for the ill." Today people have understood the significance of exercise and work out for better living.  

The concept of group practice of health services is not a new one in western countries too. Early approaches included workers on the rail roads as they were extended across the continent services for mariners and care for those in the armed services. One of the first one a prepaid basis (1913) was a health center sponsored by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York city. Since that time many different approaches to prepaid groups medical practice have developed. Some including the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, have been brought into being by employees, initially to serve the employees and there families. During the 1960's the insurance companies began to develop an active concern with prepaid group practice arrangements.  

8 P.O. Astrand, Health and Fitness, p.18.  
The concept of modern health clubs and gymnasiums has crept into Indian society from the western countries. Today the health clubs and gymnasiums in India are in developing stage but have gained a vast popularity in the society. The author was interested to take up the survey of the role of health clubs in the health promotion of the sedentary persons, in the metropolitan cities of India. The survey was also conducted to assess the facilities available in those health clubs and the fitness programmes that they are carrying out.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to inquire the role of health clubs in the health promotion of health of sedentary population.

**Delimitation**

The study was delimited to selected health clubs of four metropolitan cities in India namely: Delhi, Kolkatta, Mumbai and Chennai.

**Delhi**

1. Ozon Health Center

2. Pulse Impulse
3. Planet X
4. Total Fitness Center
5. Arrow Gymnasium

**Kolkata**

1. Reva Puri
2. Thakral's
3. Thakral's
4. Slim Point
5. Slim Gym

**Mumbai**

1. Talwalkars Gym
2. Health Spa
3. Raymonds
4. Bombay Gymkhana
5. Talwalkars
Chennai

1. Robin and Robin

2. Nichani Health Care Center

3. Vijaya Health Care

4. Health Club Fitness Center

5. Asana Andiyapan

2. The study was further delimited to the selected sedentary persons who were the regular customers of the above mentioned clubs for a minimum duration of 3 months. These sedentary person were ranged between 25 to 45 years of age and responded to the questionnaire and interview in an attempt to elaborate the role of health clubs for health promotion.

3. The study was also delimited to the instructors of the selected health clubs. One instructor from each club was asked to respond through questionnaire and interview on the role of health clubs in promotion of health of sedentary persons.
Limitations

1. The socio-economic status of the subjects might have influenced the concept of health and consequently influenced the results of the study was considered a limitation to the study.

2. The study was based on questionnaire and interview method. As it was not possible in terms of finance and time to interview all the subjects of the study. This might be a limitation of the study.

3. The subjects were assured that their response will be kept confidential but still some respondents might have hesitated in presenting their true feelings, was considered a limitation to the study.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that the responses of customers on each item would be equally distributed on the scale.

It was further hypothesized that the responses of Health Club Instructors would also be equally distributed on the scale.
Definition and Explanation of Terms

Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is the capacity to carry out reasonably well various forms of physical activities without being unduly tired and includes qualities important to the individual health and well being.\(^{10}\)

It can mean anything from "that feeling of pleasure which a person experiences when he stands by an open window early in the morning to for those with vested interests - some recommended that we ought to drink more milk or beer."\(^{11}\)

Health

The condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit, especially freedom from physical disease or pain.\(^{12}\)

Health is a state of complete physical mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity.\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\) Uppal, Physical Fitness How to Develop, p.4.

\(^{11}\) Kenneth L. Jones, Louis W. Shainberg and Curtis O. Byer, Total Fitness (San Francisco: Confield Press, 1972), p.15.


\(^{13}\) K. Park, Preventive and Social Medicine (Nagpur : Banarsi Das Bhanot, 1994), p.12.
Health Club

It can be described as a unit which promotes health and fitness among people through physical activity and in various other forms such as counseling related to diet, life style etc.

Sedentary People

In this study sedentary people means those persons who lead normal life, doing routine work but not involve in any kind of active physical activities.

Significance of the Study

As it is evident that the metropolitan cities of India are converting into a concrete jungle. These cities are also over populated and hence no space is left vacant for grounds or parks where people can breath fresh air leave apart their taking part in physical work outs. The life has become very fast and people are running out of time.

The modern concept of health clubs is a right direction towards improving physical ability of the people, who are becoming health conscious day by day. In the opinion of the researcher the following are the significances of the study in which a health club serves as a unit for health promotion and maintenance.
1. The study will highlight the contribution made by these health clubs towards health promotion of Indian citizens.

2. The study may highlight the popularity and importance of health clubs in metropolitan cities.

3. The study will highlight the latest trends followed by health clubs in promotion of health among the Indian citizens.

4. The study may be of great help in formulating the programme for health promotion of sedentary population.

5. The study will also help in finding out the status of professional people employed or running the health clubs.

6. The study may aid in improving the standards of the Health Clubs.

7. The result of the study may enable the people to improve their knowledge about the Health Clubs.

8. The study will also find out the programmes offered by these health clubs towards health promotion.

9. The study will help to know the status of health clubs in metropolitan cities of India.