

We the People and Fit India Movement

Abstract

India is witnessing many new initiatives with a view to visualize the dream of New India. One such move is the commencement of Fit India Movement in August 2019 on annual sports day, the objective being to bless citizens of the country with physical and mental health so that India can rise to the level of major power. Republic of India knows well her duties to its citizens that's why this awareness campaign is launched which is positive and pre-emptive in nature. It matches with the culture of the soil as well. But corresponding to the enormity and magnitude of the task, some separate activists and volunteers are also required. Certainly the move will usher the country in a new era of health, honour, peace and prosperity.

Keywords: Fit India Movement, Sports Day, Sports Activities, Healthy India, New India.

Introduction

"We don't stop exercising because we grow old; we grow old because we stop exercising". Kenneth Cooper

Modern period of human civilization began with Sovereign State System in 17th century. State, said to be the unit of governance, possesses four main ingredients – population, territory sovereignty and govt. Out of these four elements, "for the composition of any human organisation the existence of population is most important"¹. To provide security to its citizens (population) is one of the most fundamental tasks of a state. Here security means, to defend people from any aggression, to accomplish the physiological needs of population and to see that the population of the state remains healthy and fit. T. H. Green an English philosopher of 19th century, in his work "Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligations"(published in 1882) remarked, "the state is an institution for the promotion of common good"². To Green, state has to maintain external conditions for inner development of men. "Good health, education, residence and working conditions are the requirements for the moral development of the human personality"³. Kautilya also echoes the health related welfare duties to be exhibited by the king. He says "king should personally supervise the welfare of children, orphans, women, sick men and old people. He should pay proper attention to the nourishment of his subject"⁴. Thus the maintenance of proper health of the people is one of the main function of a state and Indian constitution makers gave proper heed to it while framing the constitution of the country. India has a vast population next only to China in the world, which was 760 million in 1985 and now is supposed to touch the mark of 1.30 billion plus. Some 65% of her population is below 35 years of age. Thus India is a young and energetic country. Govt. of India, through Ministry of Sports, launched historic "Fit India Movement" programme, which was observed all over the country on 29th August 2019.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to study the concept, relevance and dynamics of Fit India Movement. The aim of Govt. of India is to transform the country into New India and establish her as a major power in world arena. This demands the country to be clean, green and healthy. Fit India Movement is a step in that direction. The paper attempts to uncover these aspects and bring this discourse into public domain with easiest interpretations.

Methodology and Review of Literature

As the issue at discourse, Fit India Movement, is a new one, availability of literature in form of primary source on it, is not available in plenty. Hence, secondary sources are main and major help. Empirical data on Fit India Movement can also be collected, procured and analysed only after one year of its implementation. However, personal observations, discussion in peer groups, digital platforms, and print media have been banked upon mostly in writing the paper. Regarding the health of people as



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the responsibility of State, enormous writing by major political scientists is available and interestingly Constitution of India incorporates many provisions either explicitly or implicitly catering to the health needs of the people of the country.

We the People and Fit India Movement

Constitution makers of India were well enlightened and seasoned gems who knew the tasks to be assigned to State. Indian constitution incorporated some provisions providing for the health of her citizens. Firstly it bestows all powers into the hands of her people. Its Preamble says "We the People of India....."⁵. It means highest priority is given to the people and their well being. Preamble also assures "dignity" which denotes that the governance in the country is qualified by the "welfare of the Indian people" because leading a dignified life presupposes a healthy life in which a citizen feels and finds herself fit as well. Article 21, given in part 3 of the constitution, guarantees Right to Life to every person on Indian soil. The logical corollary of this article is that a person cannot be supposed to live in sub human conditions. "Compelling a person to live in sub human conditions also amounts to the taking away of his life, not by execution of a death sentence but by a slow and gradual process, by robbing him of all his human qualities and graces"⁶.

Even judiciary in India is also dynamic and regards top priority to the people's welfare and well being through her various judgements. Supreme court of India has also in Bandhua Mukti Morcha vs. Union of India Case 1984 laid down that "the right to live with human dignity, enshrined in article 21,includes human health"⁷. It has also been held by the apex court in the State of Punjab vs. Mohinder Singh Chawla case in 1997 that "the right to health is integral to the right to life and the govt. has a constitutional obligation to provide health facilities"⁸.

Under part 4 A, fundamental duties for the citizens of India (though these duties are non justiciable in a court of law), have been provided. Article 51-A, (d) asks citizens to "defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so; (g) to protect and improve natural environment ; (i) to safeguard public property (j) to strive towards excellence in all sphere of individual and collective activity"⁹. The significance of Fit India Movement lies at this juncture because whatever expectations of fundamental duties are enumerated in the Constitution of India, these can be performed by citizens when they are healthy and fit. It means - fit citizens are a prerequisite if country has to succeed and rise to the level of developed India and New India.

Constitution also assigns some tasks to the State of India in part 4 Directive Principles of State Policy. For example article 39 (e) state shall make such policies "that the health and strength of workers..... and tender age of children are not abused, (f) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner"¹⁰. Fit India Movement is a right step towards this direction. Duty of State to care for citizens health, in most loud and clear terms, have been elaborated in article 47 which

reads "the state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties"¹¹. The same article stands for Prohibition which is injurious to health and akin to Gandhi's dream.

Not only the Constitution of India but international law also stand and advocate the noble cause of health of the people to be served.

Article 25 (1) of Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and his family,.....medical care, right to security in the event ofsickness,....old age or other lack of livelihood...."¹². Likewise, International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights in its part 3 (article 6-15) under article 11 advocates for "an adequate standard of living"¹³. Under article 12, the same Covenant stands for "health, specifically the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health"¹⁴ of people.

India observes Annual Sports Day on 29th August every year. "The day is celebrated to honour the legendary hockey player Major Dhyan Chand Singh. 29th August happens to be the birth anniversary of Dhyan Chand who made India proud by his extra ordinary sporting skills"¹⁵. Govt of India under the dynamic and innovative leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, adhering to these provisions of constitution of India and honouring international obligations, launched Fit India Movement on 29th August 2019 in Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium New Delhi. Live telecast of this programme was seen in educational institutions. A fitness oath was also administered to students, people's representatives and all citizens. "I promise to myself that I will devote time for physical activity and sports every day and I will encourage my family members and neighbours to be physically fit and make India a fit nation"¹⁶. (Fitness Oath). Govt. of U.P. also issued orders to celebrate this event with much fanfare. The purpose is to inculcate Physical activities and Sports in the daily life of citizens so that they could remain healthy and active. This culture of remaining fit is a native one, not something alien. So this movement must reach to the masses as it is need of our time also. This cult of fitness needs to be ingrained in fellow beings. In order to succeed in life, fitness is a prior condition for any person, no matter what is the field or aim of life.

Again in November 2019, Govt. of U.P. reminded the educational institutions to chalk out "Institutional Fitness Plan", under which separate fitness activity is to be prepared for each class. Such plan should be incorporated in syllabus as well. Faculty of physical education is to supervise and monitor these activities. In his/her absence, teacher with sport inclination and enthusiasm is to discharge these tasks. Every day a time slot is to be assigned for fitness activities. The performance of such activities must be undertaken by students, teaching and non teaching staff. Disseminating the importance of culture and need of "Fitness" is the task assigned to universities and institutions.

Activities under Institutional Fitness Plan

Institutions of higher education have to prepare and execute these plans in such a way that students and employees are inspired to partake into health and fitness activities¹⁷.

Execution of Policies and Conventions

1. In order to maintain physical and mental health, students and teachers, will make efforts together and regularly participate in Yoga / Sports activities.
2. Students and employees should be inspired and enthused to devote at least one hour every day for sports / run or to walk on foot.
3. Students and employees should be encouraged for cycling in institutional campus.
4. In every hostel, indoor games like chess, billiard, carom and badminton must be facilitated.
5. Students, teachers and employees should be awakened to keep campus clean and green.
6. Students and employees should be motivated to adopt healthy food practices.
7. To speculate on healthy food items and shun junk food in campus, discussion must be undertaken. In this respect, students and employees must be made aware with negative fall out of junk food and consequent obesity and weight gain.
8. Execution of annual Yoga / Meditation programmes.
9. To hold Yoga / Meditation classes regularly.
10. Organising "fitness week" for students and employees.
11. To engage students in physical activities, annual run programmes to be organised.
12. Incorporating wellness and health activities in major celebrations of the institution.
13. With the help of local hospitals, regular health and medical fitness camps to be organised.
14. Sharing fitness, health and wellness activities undertaken by the institution, at the social media platforms.
15. Organising Seminar, Talk and other programmes on fitness, health and wellness.
16. To encourage research projects on fitness and health.

Material /Basic infrastructure

In all institutions / Universities minimum infrastructure for indoor and outdoor games should be procured. For jogging, running, walking on foot and other sports activities, sports field should be developed accordingly.

To boost up a campus free from drug trafficking

Drugs free campus should be developed. Zero tolerance to any drug in all institutions of higher education. Competent counsellors to be arranged for mental health, tension management and tackling the drug addicts.

Govt. also clarified that these activities are just indicators which an institution can apply as per its interest and availability of resources.

Fitness has some other aspects as well. Today dependency on allopathy is rising at massive speed neglecting the other options for treatment. Many small diseases can be cured if regular exercises, proper dieting, and nutritional food intake is

adopted. In order to keep physical body fit, different Yogas, Pranayams, and physical activities must be practised regularly. This will reduce the queue in hospitals and financial expenses of the family head. Even side effects of allopathic medicines on liver, kidney, pancreas, spleen, heart, digestive system and nervous system can be avoided. This practice in turn will increase the resistance power of human body. Remaining fit also presumes that intake of food will be pure and health prone, preferably, vegetarian food, fresh food, home made food, instead of junk food, avoidance of spicy and oily food, saying no to smoking and drinks.

Fitness is closely linked to cleanliness. Not only personal hygiene and cleanliness but cleanliness of the surroundings also must be taken into account. In order to remain fit, sanitation is a precondition. Dirty life style inflicts many diseases.

Sports is useful not only in keeping physical body fit but also it germinates the seeds of discipline, adaptation, healthy competition, courage to bear loss and laboriousness. Moreover it also aggravates the beauty of human life. Inculcation of Yoga and exercises among children from early childhood days is going to be a promising one. This programme is likely to transform India into "New India" which Prime Minister visualises.

Health Scenario in India

Though India has been a success story in many areas especially in space technology, Antarctica campaigns, computer software development but its social indicators in health, are still in bleak state. Death rate is very high, hospitals are not properly available, number of doctors does not match to the requirements, poverty causes death etc. As per the report by the Registrar General of India, "the leading causes of death are senility (23.5%), circulatory diseases (10.8%), causes peculiar to infancy (9.6%), and fevers (7.7%). In terms of morbidity, it is estimated that about 2-3% of the population suffers from some kind of illness everyday. The common communicable diseases include cholera, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, tuberculosis, blindness, malnutrition, deficiency anaemia, worm infestations, and water-borne diseases"¹⁸. Besides, life is very fast now. Today mental diseases like depression, anxiety, fatigue, stress, anger impatience etc, are constantly at rise. Mental fitness is also disturbed today due to the acute work pressure. When emotions, ideas and behaviour of a person causes problem to other persons, it shows mental illness. Hence people should practise Pranayams and meditation for mental fitness. Mental illness is making people weaker, culminating in rising suicides.

Dismal scenario is occurring as dictum of prevention is better than cure, is overlooked. Preventive pills are not adopted. Thus to address the issue of health, Fit India Movement is correct step which is consistent with the conditions prevalent in India.

Suggestions

The main agents of change under Fit India Movement are educational institutions. So it is to be ensured that regular class room studies are not

hampered. Adequate staff and personnel must be arranged for successful execution of this programme as just one faculty in the institution to perform such diverse tasks, in addition to regular class room teaching and related activities, is excessive expectation. Some activists and volunteers can also be recruited to serve the purpose of Fit India Movement. Even the number of people to be served under Fit India Movement is very high. Proper finance to maintain the sports activities, indoor and outdoor, jogging track, related equipments should be provided. Educational institutions are already over burdened with plethora of activities, days, events and campaigns. Hence some burden of observance needs to be released so that Fit India Movement does not become monotonous and stereo type.

Conclusions

State has a duty to keep its people healthy and fit. Fit India Movement is a step in that direction. Vision and dream of New India can be fulfilled by accomplishing the policies and practices of Fit India Movement. Fit India Movement can be characterised by three flying colours, it is a pre emptive step (prior preparation), it is preventive step (precaution in advance) and it is a positive step (pervasion and permeation of good health practices). Fitness of citizens is being converted into a mass movement by arousing peoples awareness about it. It also reflects the prudence of leadership.

Isaac Bickerstaff remarked-"Health is the greatest of all possessions, a pale cobbler is better than a sick king".

Endnotes

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