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## Ancient Indian Historical back ground of physical education and sports

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### ABSTRACT

*It is a historical fact that India became cultured and civilized when most of the countries in the world were leading barbaric or uncivilized life. Here the knowledge of wisdom spread like a wild fire attempting to engulf whatever was base and incongruent. The first books in the world, the vedas were written here, mathematics spread from this land, astronomy and astrology emerged from here and a new class of Rishis, spiritual leaders well-versed in their search for truth and masters of great learning and great writers emerged. Nowhere in world is found such a class which has given to the world so much. They ran educational institutions called 'Gurukulas' in a scheduled place as forest where the teacher and the disciple had to live together for a number of years away from all allurements. Life here was all for learning. The education also included physical education.*

**Keywords:** Indus valley civilization, vedic period, Gurukuls, ancient civilization, physical education and sports.

### Indus Valley civilization:

These people called Aryans came from central Asia and settled near the Indus river around 2500 B.C. They founded The Indus Valley Civilization. There is no written record of the period because the first book that is available, the Vedas, was written around 2000 B.C. So the only source of information of this period can be gained from excavations. The excavations at Mohanjodaro and Harappa reveal many interesting things. For instance, the Great Baths at Mohanjodaro show that the Aryans gave great importance to physical fitness and recreation. This period was much earlier than that of Homeric, Olympic or earlier Greek when civilization dawned in Europe. The first question for the Aryans when they came to Indus was safety and settlement. So they were most interested in war-like activities as archery, hunting, horse riding, spear throwing, wrestling and club-fighting. Once they got settled, they paid attention to cultural and other physical activities, the great baths and dancing bear.

### Vedic and epic period:

After the Indus Valley Civilization period and before the Homeric or Greek periods in Greece, the two important periods were the Vedic and Epic periods. The first was around 2000-1000 B.C. and the later around 1000-600 B.C. In the Vedic period, the Vedas, the first books in the word were written and in the Epic period, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were written; the exact periods are not known.

The Vedas describe about the earlier life of the Aryan i.e. before 2000 B.C. They advanced from the Indus river and crossing the five rivers reached the Gigantic plains. They settled but still advanced further. So though they paid attention to war like techniques and exercises, they also began to pay attention to other activities. Brahmins, Khatiya, Vashiya and Sudras. The Brahmin were men of wisdom or knowledge and were well-versed in the scripture, the Khashatriyas were the warriors fought and who ruled, the Vashya were men of business and the Sudra performed manual work such as cleaning etc. this was not a rigid classification. The rulers kept Brahmins as their advisers. The Brahmins founded Gurukulas the teaching institutions.

### Yogic period:

India was very much interested in spiritualism and mixed physical, mental and spiritual activities. Patanjali gave Raj Yoga to the world. Of the Epic period which ranged from 1000 to 600 B.C., the Ramayana and the Mahabharata describe clearly the physical activities performed at that time. The royalty and the soldiers practiced archery, hunting, horse riding, chariot racing, sword fighting, javelin and disc throwing, wrestling, club fighting and axe wielding. Great warriors in all these types of warfare was tested. Marriage of Rama and Sita and that of Arjuna and Draupati are the most prominent examples. Rama lifted the bow which no other could lift and Arjuna shot at the eye of a revolving fish by seeing to its reflection.

### Gurukul Concept

Gurukulas became more prominent and physical education along with spiritual and ethical education etc. continued to be imparted at these institutions. Dancing assumed more importance and even men took active part in this type of physical activity.

### Jainism and Buddhism period:



After the end of Mahabharata, it was a dark age. Jainism and Buddhism which preached non-violence rapidly. Most people became despondent and many went to monasteries. Martial arts were looked down upon and there was no particular type of physical activity in which people took part or showed interest.

**Maurya period:** However, a powerful empire of Chander Gupt Maurya rose in the north-east. Chanakya played a great role in its establishment. Again the Aryans began to take part in martial arts, these were especially acquired by the soldiers. Alexander the great of Greece invaded India during the Maurya period and systematically imparted to the soldiers. Alexander the great of Greece invaded India during the Maurya period and systematically imparted to the soldiers.

**Maurya and Taxila:** Maurya and Taxila were the important seats of learning which attracted students from far and wide. Taxila was founded around 300 B.C. Physical education was a must along with branches of other learning. Taxila was founded around 300 B.C. Physical education was a must along with branches of other learning. Taxila was founded around 300 B.C. Physical education was a must along with branches of other learning.

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