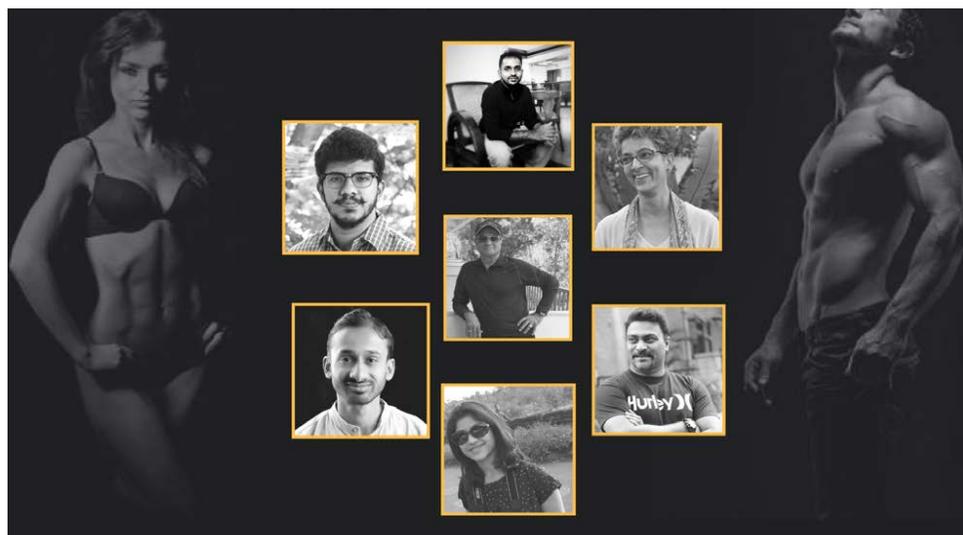


Going Beyond Fitness fads and Getting Real

Jul 25, 2017

From aerial yoga to krav maga, a burgeoning fitness industry serves up variety of recipes for fitness buffs. But can one achieve fitness independence without burning a hole in one's pocket? HE finds out.



For Indians, last decade brought a new awareness of the need for physical activity and the normalization of exercise as a form of leisure.

Yet, in spite of the considerable buzz about exercise, health clubs and muscle, many Indians are still not engaging in sufficient physical activity. This suggests that idea of fitness is more popular than the idea of exercise. Clearly, a large chunk of population had been excluded from the fitness movement for reasons of cost, bias, time or disinterest.

WORK

IT

OUT

**THERE ARE SEVERAL OPEN AIR
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PRESS AND PARALLEL BARS.**

-Natasha Swar



Natasha Namit Swar, a Mumbai-based yoga instructor, points out that even a modest space can suffice to do fitness routines. “Fitness is more important than ever and one should make use of whatever facilities they have access to,” says Swar, who conducted a free yoga session in Hiranandani Garden Park in Powai. “From IT giants to banks, everyone has set up gyms. Infact,there are numerous programmes like Yoga by the Bay and Equal streets where people can connect with trainers. And these are not the only options available for fitness aficionados, there are several open air gyms in Mumbai equipped with abs developers, hip twisters, air walkers, leg and chest press and parallel bars ,” she adds.

The self confessed yoga addict has a manic obsession to constantly explore the latest in fitness apps-from pilates to ashtanga yoga.“For beginners, there are free apps like Insight Timer that can guide you,” she adds.

ARJUN NARANG



**IT WAS ONLY WHEN THE DOCTOR
WARNED ME THAT I REALLY STARTED
TAKING CARE OF MY HEALTH**



Swar is not alone. Many more fitness enthusiasts are making their fitness dreams come true, without spending a lot. Sixty- four-year-old Arjun Narang definitely knows a thing or two about benefits of functional training in an open gym. At 64, he still packs quite a punch in his frame and conducts training sessions for nearly 30 residents of Banashankari, a suburb in Bangalaoe. “I had led a typical lifestyle of a businessman in the IT city. It was only when the doctor warned me that I really started taking care of my health . That’s when I started focusing on my fitness. Once I noticed the changes in my body, wanted to share it with others too,” says Narang, who conducts classes at a nominal rate of Rs 6000 per annum.

BUSTING

FOOD

MYTHS

**DR.
NANDITA
SHAH**



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But is this just the tale of few extraordinary people like Narang with grit? Fitness of course cannot be free of the sweat of social, physical, and psychological issues. Take for instance diet. A major obstacle to changing people’s diet in India is that they don’t know what our body was originally designed for says, Dr Nandita Shah, founder of SHARAN (Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature) . “Animals know what to eat based on instinct. A cow knows that it has to eat grass and lion knows it has to eat meat. However, we have been conditioned by society to consume foods that are not suitable to our species. We force our children to drink milk, and make it more palatable by adding cocoa and sugar. No other mammal drinks milk of other species,” she notes.

Shah points out that we cannot tackle obesity and lifestyle diseases without addressing how the food system has been set up in the country. “Many conventionally grown fruits and vegetables are covered in pesticide residue today. Shoppers looking to avoid chemicals in their plate, can start with organic food.”

Shah says that we should shift to a whole plant based (dairy free) diet rather than an omnivorous, high calorie-high fat diet that the Indian society consumes. ” Shah notes that it’s never too late to jump on holistic diet plan and points out that details of dairy and meat alternatives are available on SHARAN’s [website](#).

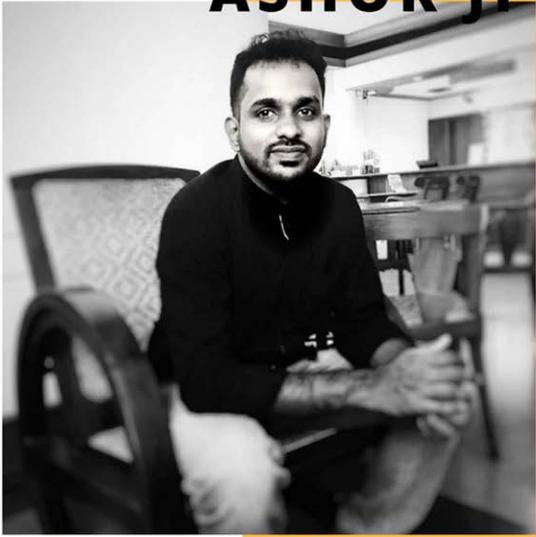
“You can start your day with a fruit and a green smoothie, follow it up

with any of their breakfast recipes, if you are hungry. Lunch and dinner should incorporate salads and local vegetables,” she concludes.



**GOOGLE
YOUR
WAY TO
FITNESS**

ASHOK JP



HAVING A HIGH MAINTENANCE FITNESS LIFESTYLE IS USUALLY POSSIBLE FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME ”

A graphic with a yellow background. On the left, the text "GOOGLE YOUR WAY TO FITNESS" is arranged in four stacked dark blue boxes. On the right, the name "ASHOK JP" is written in bold black letters above a black and white photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a black shirt, sitting at a table. Below the photo, a quote in bold black text reads: "HAVING A HIGH MAINTENANCE FITNESS LIFESTYLE IS USUALLY POSSIBLE FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME" followed by a large black quotation mark.

Sometimes the goal of getting into fantastic shape can also become a personal nightmare. “It took me lot of time to learn what was

missing,”says Ashok JP, a management student based in Trivandrum . “Sure I was lean and muscular, but it was at the cost of my lifestyle and money,” he adds. “Personally, I don’t practice the conventional rules of fitness. Having a high maintenance fitness lifestyle is usually possible for short periods of time ,”says Jayaprakash, who has developed taste for old school fitness methods like yoga and jogging. He also notes that he follows blogs like fitnut.in, which publishes articles on nutrition, wellness and workout videos.

MUKUL CHOWDHARY

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Mukul Chowdhary, founder of [Yogi Re!](https://yogire.com), a fitness startup in Bangalore seconds his views. “Our fitness culture often tells people that you need to do 101 things to stay fit. However, if you focus on just one or two simple things, everything else doesn’t matter ,” notes the engineer-turned-Yogi. Chowdhary believes that his transformation happened after attending Isha Foundation Inner Engineering programme. Today he runs several [free](#) and paid workshops for yoga in various parts of the IT city and notes that one size doesn’t fit all. “It would be crazy to suggest an equipment intensive programme to someone who doesn’t have access to a good gym . Other solutions such as if you live near a lake you can swim in doing yoga or find out if there is a cycling group in your area is a more feasible option,” he says.

GET

FIT

WITH A

SPORT

**SCHOOLS SHOULD GIVE
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SESSIONS**



**ELVIS
JOSEPH** ”

Genetics, biological and social factors naturally contribute to fitness, but the extreme desire for fitness matters as much. It's not surprising that several fitness efforts are directed towards children.

Elvis Joseph, a former athlete and founder, Bangalore School Sports Foundation, highlights the need to break barriers in the community and bring children to the mainstream through sports as a medium of transformation contributing to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. "Since its inception in 2009, BSS, has empowered and trained thousands of children. It also runs several programmes like Champion in Me, a fitness training programme for HIV positive children and "I am She" for girls from underprivileged background," he adds.

He points out that there should be physical education classes everyday in school. "Schools should give priority to sports and not use sports periods for academic sessions. Teachers have to realize that physical education classes cannot be used for other academic purposes."

FITNESS IS A WAY OF LIFE

URBAN PLANNING CAN ALSO
IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE
BY PRESERVING AND CREATING
MULTIPLE PUBLIC AND OPEN
SPACES

- Mathew Idiculla



One thing is sure, urban design and planning can actually lay a significant role in improving the health of a city's inhabitants. A comprehensive urban planning framework would recognise that cities are not primarily about providing high-end infrastructure but about improving the lives of its people in a holistic manner, which includes their health and wellbeing.

“Urban planning can promote the health of the citizens by providing the city with wide pedestrian friendly footpaths and pavements that encourage walking and cycling,” says Mathew Idiculla, an urban policy expert at Centre for Law and Policy Research (CLPR), Bangalore.

“Prioritisation of pedestrians should be coupled with high level of investment in public transportation to ensure that people can commute from home to work or leisure by foot and buses/metro, instead of cars. Urban planning can also improve the health of people by preserving and creating multiple public and open spaces which can be arenas where many fitness-improving activities ranging from yoga to cricket take place. Such planning measures can ensure that people follow a more healthy form of living through everyday practices,” he concludes.