

India's Fitness Industry Amid COVID-19

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Abstract:

Since ancient times, fitness has been a part of the Indian culture. However, with increased western influence and changing lifestyle, the quest for fitness has also become modern and new trends are gaining importance. The entry of Giant techs like Google, Apple, etc has given a great impetus to fitness industry. According to Redseer Consulting, the market value of fitness industry in India was US \$12 billion in 2018. According to Fitternity, there are around 24,000 gyms and studios in the country. To sustain themselves amid COVID-19, they are providing online training sessions over WhatsApp, Instagram and other channels of social media. The employees working in fitness industry have been laid off because of bankruptcy within gyms. During corona virus to enhance their immunity, many people took cycling to keep themselves fit. Under Unlock-3.0, Government decided to re-open gyms by following some generic and specific preventive measures. In the post COVID-19 world, the fitness industry worldwide is set to witness a major change with prime focus on social distancing and hygiene measures. The gyms will have to accept new normal. When gyms do finally re-open, capacity is likely to be reduced by half to maintain the 6 feet distancing, while personal trainers will have to give advice from a distance, digital apps will be developed, social media will be utilized, etc. At-home workouts and online fitness training sessions will become more prominent. Hence, the gym industry will be moving more towards Digitalization of fitness products and services in near future.

Keywords: Digitalization of fitness industry, At-home Workouts, Online training sessions, Trend of Cycling, Social Distancing, Corona Virus, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Fitness means striving for and to attain a good physical condition. A person who is fit is able to carry out daily tasks without any hindrance. For example: Being able to do any physical activity without becoming exhausted. Hence, it implies to have enough energy. Fitness may refer to a wide variety of physical capacities such as flexibility, muscular strength, endurance, agility, balance, power, speed, energy and a healthy heart and lungs.¹ According to the US-based *Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*, physical fitness is defined as “the ability to carry out daily tasks with vigor and alertness, without undue fatigue and with ample energy to enjoy leisure-time pursuits and respond to emergencies”. According to the *UNESCO Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978)*, “Every human being has a fundamental right to access physical education and sport, which is essential for the overall development of an

¹ Hilvoorde, I.V., Stokvis, R. (2013). *Fitness-industry*. In David Levinson & Gertrud Pfister (Eds.), *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport* (3rd ed.) (pp. 513–517). Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group.

individual. The freedom to develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and sport must be guaranteed both within the educational system and in other aspects of social life.”²

The word fitness industry and wellness industry are often used interchangeably. Fitness refers to physical strength whereas wellness is the state of having a healthy mind and body. In other words, the former means physical well-being and latter refers to an overall state of being healthy. From the perspective of industry, the wellness industry comprises of three key segments i.e. nutraceuticals, alternative therapies, fitness and slimming apart from salons, spas and aesthetic dermatology. Nutraceuticals are functional products that provide supplementary health benefits. It includes functional food like fortified oil, probiotic yoghurt, iodized salt, etc; functional beverages like energy drinks; health supplements like protein supplements, chyavanprash, etc. Alternative therapies include ayurveda, homeopathy, unani, sowa-rigpa, yoga, siddha, naturopathy. Ministry of AYUSH was established by government of India in 2014 to ensure optimal development and propagation of these alternative medicines for the wellness of an individual. Fitness involves exercise and healthy food. Consulting dieticians and nutritionists have also become popular for maintaining right nutrition levels. The fitness industry includes any person, company, or entity that focuses on exercise, health, and overall wellness of the body. It may include gyms and fitness centers, personal trainers, fitness equipment companies, food and supplement companies, altheisure companies, etc. The main goal of the fitness industry is to provide services and products that promote health and wellness while drawing a profit from the customers.³

Since ancient times, fitness has been a part of the Indian culture, as it is evident from the existence of village akharas, yoga and ayurveda practices in the country. However, with increased western influence and changing lifestyle, the quest for fitness has also become modern. In present times, the fitness industry is expanding with the development of new trends to keep a person healthy and fit.

In this century, fitness seekers are increasing because of increasing health and wellness consciousness among them. One of the world’s largest and fastest growing digital analytics firm *Latent View Analytics* discovered major gym and fitness trends. These trends are based upon approximately 150 million data points including product information, product usage, product reviews, search terms, social media conversations, etc over the last 10 years.⁴ Following are the major trends of gyms and fitness industry:

1. Working out at home is not a trend – It is only a seasonal trend which peaks during the winters. Otherwise, home workouts are not in much demand. Rarely, there are few companies which have grown rapidly in the home workout market. Most notable company among them is *Peloton* while other companies have failed to reach consumers buying home workout equipment.
2. Community in gym workouts is the top motivator for consumers to visit gyms – Social experiences at the gyms have been considered to be highest motivating factor for joining the gyms.
3. Technology development in fitness is growing and consumers are driving that growth – The products by fitness applications like *Fitbit* are widely used at gyms, in outdoor workout and home workout. The technology development in fitness is concentrating upon the following main areas i.e. performance improvement, experiencing the gym in new ways and marketplace.

² <http://ficci.in/spdocument/22940/FICCI-Fitness-365-Report.pdf>

³ http://ficci.in/spdocument/23105/Wellness-and-Beauty2019_Online.pdf

⁴ <https://www.latentview.com/newsroom/2019/>

4. Coaching and performance improvement – Various companies are developing artificial intelligence (AI) to track real time and personalized instructions by the fitness seekers. For eg: the companies like *Asensei* have developed an outfit for rowing and yoga to monitor the movements by using artificial intelligence. The specific instructions about how to move your body based on what it senses through clothes are given by a female voice. Another company *Sensoria* has used an “intel inside” approach to make artificial intelligence-based wearables for athletes to perform efficiently. Sensoria’s software can be used by any garment or footwear manufacturer.
5. Moving the gym to new venues – The companies are using different techniques like virtual reality, live classes, etc to attract people towards fitness. Some companies like *Black Box VR* have linked gaming with gyming. The user puts on the virtual reality equipments which are attached with weights. So, when game begins, the user’s body movements result in lifting of the weights in different ways and complete workout is done by the end of game. Hence, these kinds of techniques help to attract those people who love video games but otherwise they are not interested to visit gyms or do exercise. Another company known as *Forte* has developed hardware and software that can be installed in workout studios and gyms at home for live and on-demand fitness classes for those consumers that cannot visit the gym. And it has been found by Forte that consumers prefer live classes more because they are real and authentic as compared to recorded classes.⁵
6. Marketplaces – Marketplaces are also developing in gym and fitness industry. One of them is *Athlete’s Guide*, a digital marketplace that helps to enhance interaction between NCAA athletes and high school athletes and train the younger athletes in a better way.

These new technologies in fitness industry have given wider choices to the consumers to buy variety of fitness products and services as per their requirement and interests. There has been increasing competition among the companies to launch consumer friendly fitness products to attract large number of consumers toward their products. So, these companies are investing huge capital to attract consumers having different demand and of different interests. The entry of giant techs like Google, Apple, Samsung, etc in the fitness industry will give a great impetus to this industry. Hence, in the upcoming days, we are going to see huge number of technological innovations, start-ups, venture capital infusion, etc in the gym and fitness industry which have a great potential and prospective.

ACSM’s (The American College Of Sports Medicine) conducted 14th annual survey i.e. *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2020*. Thirty eight trends were enumerated in *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2020*.⁶ The top five fitness trends identified by the survey were:

1. Wearable technology: It includes fitness trackers, smart watches, HR monitors and GPS tracking devices. For e.g. Fitness trackers manufactured by Samsung Gear Fit 2, Misfit, Fitbit and Apple, etc.
2. High-intensity interval training (HIIT): It involves short bursts of high-intensity bouts of exercise followed by a short period of rest. Despite high potential of injury during HIIT exercises, it is popular among large number of gym goers.
3. Group training: Group exercise instructors teach, lead and motivate individuals through intentionally designed larger in-person group movement classes. It has more than five members in a group.

⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2019/11/20/the-biggest-trends-in-gyms-and-the-fitness-industry/?sh=54056d1a7465>

⁶ https://journals.lww.com/acsmhealthfitness/Fulltext/2019/11000/WORLDWIDE_SURVEY_OF_FITNESS_TRENDS_FOR_2020.6.aspx

4. Training with free weights: Free weights, barbells, kettle bells, dumbbells, etc are used to train different muscles in a body. Free weights are used to increase the resistance of muscles.
5. Personal training: Personal training includes fitness testing and goal setting with the trainer working one on one with a client to prescribe workouts specific to client's individual needs and goals.

The fitness industry in India is evolving at fast speed. The age of digitalization have introduced new modes to exercise to keep one healthy and fit. The fitness industry is concentrating not merely on new modes for fitness but also reviving the old ones like naturopathy, ayurveda, yoga, etc which is evident from the increasing demand for traditional methods to keep people healthy.

KEY GROWTH DRIVERS FOR FITNESS INDUSTRY

1. Huge young population base - The 15-34 age group population is the main target of the fitness industry which equal to 34.33% of the total population in 2020.
2. Increasing lifestyle related ailments - The changing food habits with the growth of urbanization gave rise to lifestyle disorders like hypertension, diabetes, overweight, etc. This eventually induced the need for increasing healthcare services and investment in fitness industry.
3. Growing awareness - Increasing health consciousness, awareness about fitness and wellness products is also responsible for increased investment in fitness industry.
4. The increased disposable income of India's middle class and consider going to gym as a way to keep oneself fit has become a status symbol.
5. Narrowing of Gender gap - In the past times, the gyms and health clubs were majorly dominated by males. But this trend has undergone change. Now female contribute to 45% of the total members. The participation of women is on rise with their involvement as trainers, gym customers, entrepreneurs, etc.
6. The government policies and campaigns also play vital role in the growth of fitness industry.⁷ For e.g. Through *Fit India Movement*, the government is trying to motivate people to lead a healthy lifestyle by engaging in physical exercise. It aims to bring behavioral changes i.e. from a sedentary lifestyle to a physically active lifestyle. Even wellness has been recognized as a priority sector by government for it's Make in India program.
7. The rising stress and health consciousness among the people is also one of the main reasons to join gyms and health clubs.

FITNESS MARKET

In case of India, Mumbai shows highest growth rate in fitness market. It showed an increase of sales from Rs 1200 crore in 2017 to Rs 2000 crore in 2019. According to the study of *Fitternity*, average Indian workout 4 to 6 times per month as compared to global average of 12 to 18 times per month. Thus, Indians end up overpaying in the gyms.⁸ In India, different packages are provided for enrollment in gyms. Longer the tenure of package less is the cost of package. For eg: If a person opted for a monthly package, then he or she has to pay Rs 2500, but if he or she opt for 3 months package, then have to pay Rs 6000 i.e. Rs 2000 per month. The fees of the gym depend upon the different kind of workouts and facilities offered in a gym like yoga, working with free weights and machines, aerobics, spinning classes, diet, cardio, cross fit, steam bath, etc.

⁷ <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/fitness-industry-india-investment-outlook-growth-prospects-20502.html/>

⁸ <https://www.livemint.com/money/personal-finance/how-india-pays-for-fitness-1552388405119.html>

A study conducted by *Gympik* unveil that majority of the men join gym for body weight training or to build their muscles, while women join gym to attain weight loss as they are more inclined towards dance exercise, aerobics, cardio and zumba classes.⁹

According to *Redseer Consulting*, the growing health consciousness among the Indians expanded the market value of fitness industry which includes equipments, sportswear, fitness services, recreational sports and other allied services to US \$12 billion in 2018. On the other hand it is expected that the total fitness industry will be US \$32 billion by 2022 with annual growth rate of 27%.¹⁰ And fitness services like gyms, slimming services, zumba, aerobics, crossfit, spinning exercises, etc. will value approximately US \$ 6.6 billion. But corona virus might put break on this growth.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN INDIA'S FITNESS INDUSTRY

International gym chains like Anytime Fitness, Fitness first, Gold's Gym, Snap Fitness have made their presence felt in India by opening their chains throughout India. The first branch of Gold's Gym in India was set up in 2002 and now there are 150 franchise gyms across 95 cities in India. *Gold's Gym India* is a master franchisee of the US based Gold's Gym Franchising, Inc. *Anytime Fitness* is a franchise of 24-hour health and fitness clubs having its headquarters in Woodbury, Minnesota, United States. The company operates over 4,000 franchised locations in 50 countries. They launched their first gym in India in 2013 and had 76 operational gyms as of August 2019. Anytime Fitness planned to open 100 fitness centers by the end of 2019 through an investment of approximately Rs 20 million on each center.¹¹ In India, new opportunities have been created for the entrepreneurs because of increasing popularity of gyms and doing workout to keep oneself healthy and fit.

Ankit Nagori and *Mukesh Bansal* created *Cure.Fit* i.e. technology powered health, fitness and wellness platform.¹² *Cure.Fit* aims to use technology extensively across its core functions that focus on four business units covering exercise (*Cult.Fit*), food (*Eat.Fit*), mental wellness (*Mind.Fit*) and preventive care (*Care.Fit*). Before entering the fitness industry both of them were working in e-commerce giants. Unlike a conventional gym, *Cult.Fit* centres do not rely upon machines. Instead, there are group classes focused on functional training such as kickboxing, cross fit and high-intensity interval training (HIIT). Apart from them there are cardio and core development-focused classes like football, running, zumba, spinning and yoga. Customers can book any class depending upon their interest and requirement on *Cure.Fit* application. Now there are 70 *Cult.Fit* centres across India's major metro cities like Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai, Gurgaon, Hyderabad, Amritsar, etc. Many actors, sportsperson, former models have been hired by *Cure.Fit* to promote health and fitness in each and every corner of India. Singapore's state investment arm Temasek Holdings invested US\$109 million in recent funding round in *Cure.Fit*. In 2018, *Gympik.com*, a Bengaluru-based online marketplace for discovering fitness centers and gyms raised US\$1 million from US-based venture capital firm RoundGlass Partners.¹³

⁹ <https://www.businesswireindia.com/53-percent-indians-lack-the-discipline-to-stay-fit-reveals-gympiks-research-54613.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/sports/fitso-raises-15-million-pre-series-a-funding-from-sri-capital-others/article29382442.ece>

¹¹ <https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/health-and-beauty/fitness/anytime-fitness-targets-100-open-clubs-by-2019/57423300>

¹² <https://dropoutdudes.com/cure-fit-success-story/>

¹³ <https://nxtstartup.in/sport-news/fitness-aggregator-gympik-raises-1-million-roundglass-partners#:~:text=Gympik%2C%20a%20Bangalore%2Dbased%20fitness,in%20a%20couple%20of%20tranches>

HOW FITNESS INDUSTRY TACKLED CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Businesses across the world have been hit by the lockdown to contain the spread of corona virus. Guidelines were issued by the government for maintaining social distance. So, government advised people to stay at home and avoid crowded places like gyms where they are exposed to humid environment, limited area, sharing equipment, sweating, etc which increases the chances of spread of corona virus. The closing of fitness centres during lockdown led to huge losses to fitness centres and brought unemployment among the gym employees. The extended lockdown period brought a do or die situation for the gym owners. During lockdown, gym owners were left with two options, whether to go digital or wait till the reopening of gyms with new norms. The closure of the gyms since the onset of corona virus have broken the gyms and fitness centres financially.

Badal Makwana, a franchise holder of Anytime Fitness and managing director (MD) of its gym in Andheri West said that branded gyms in posh areas require a base investment of anywhere between Rs 2 crore and Rs 3 crore. Whereas extra cost is spent on purchasing state-of-the-art equipment, hiring experienced fitness trainers and maintenance staff, etc. The shutdown of gyms has wiped out their profit and they have become bankrupt and insolvent. For the survival of their gyms, they need some waivers from the government or moratorium on their rents, etc.¹⁴ Makwana retained all his employees by paying them a lump sum package at the beginning of the lockdown because of his inability to pay them salaries.

Cure.Fit aims to combat the current COVID-19 situation in India and serve people by the addition of a wide range of essential groceries like rice, atta, pulses, oil, spices, sugar, salt, edible oil, bread, milk, eggs and ready to eat meals in its portfolio through *Whole.Fit*. The platform aims to deliver these products to customers in a timely manner. Currently, the company is providing delivery within 24 hours of order placement.¹⁵ Cure.Fit hired celebrities and fitness influencers to give live training classes or at-home sessions. From Indian sportsperson like Vijender Singh and Mary Kom to model like Nora Fatehi, have been giving online fitness classes at Cure.Fit. Users can track their performance and energy levels, and match their performance with other attendees to get an interactive and real experience. Cure.Fit launched *#MovementForMovement* campaign where via cult.live the user has to accept the challenge and work out from March 27 to April 15. For every challenge, a contribution of Rs 100 will be made to PM CARES Fund to help COVID-19 relief efforts.

HealthifyMe, an AI-led health and fitness app, has launched an initiative to help people enhance their immunity and adopt a healthy lifestyle during lockdown to combat Covid-19. Free of cost Immunity Assessment Tests have been launched by the app. Those who score low will also receive a free consultation by a trained coach. HealthifyMe has also launched at-home workouts on its app and daily live workouts with coaches, along with trackers for sleep, smoking and hand washing and other factors which play vital role in enhancing immunity. These offerings are available for all customers under the “Immunity Tab” in HealthifyMe app.¹⁶

Anytime Fitness launched a range of exciting virtual online initiatives for fitness seekers and regular gym goers to help them stay fit while engaging in live training sessions under expert trainers amid the lockdown. Anytime Fitness hastily adapted to utilize its task force of over 1500 trainers to come up with

¹⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-no-profit-since-march-many-gyms-go-digital-some-shut-shop-6468618/>

¹⁵ <https://yourstory.com/2020/02/curefit-eatfit-packaged-foods-wholefit>

¹⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/covid-19-healthifyme-launches-immunity-test/articleshow/74816440.cms>

online fitness training sessions. These online classes were an immediate hit, as searches for online fitness regimes grew overnight, with our country of 1.3 billion people going into a self-isolation mode to fight the spread of COVID-19. Anybody can visit Facebook page of Anytime Fitness India and participate in these live sessions. *Chirag Sethi*, who is owner of Anytime Fitness outlets in Delhi's Malviya Nagar and Saket, says that present situation of the fitness industry in India is completely opposite from what it was in April last year. He reveals that the months of March-April are generally their peak months after the lull of winters, with the commencement of summer vacations in schools. Many mothers seek gym memberships owing to extra time on their hands. Further he says that, "We would normally make a profit of Rs 20-28 lakh every month, but in the last two months since the lockdown began, we have registered a loss of Rs 60-80 lakh."¹⁷

Gold's Gym filed for bankruptcy, as Covid-19 hit the US economy. The 55-year old company is now looking to pursue restructuring for its 700 centres across the world. They permanently closed 30 gyms throughout the world.¹⁸ However, *Karan Valecha*, director and co-founder of Gold's Gym India assures that Gold's Gym business in India remains secure. Whereas *Nikhil Kakkar*, the Chief operating officer of Gold's Gym India, says that, "Gyms in the country are bleeding right now." Supervising 150 gyms and employing 2,000 trainers in India, Kakkar says, "Gyms were shut much before the lockdown. In Mumbai, all our gyms closed on March 13. Rent forms a major chunk of our revenue i.e. nearly 25 percent, and we are seeking waivers but landlords have not given any assurance yet. Payroll comprises 30 percent of our cost, while electricity takes up 10 percent. Payments are also to be made for housekeeping, vaults, security and maintenance of equipments; there's a thin margin."

Fit India Movement and CBSE has decided to organize online fitness sessions for school children amid the nationwide lockdown due to corona virus pandemic. Kiren Rijiju Office tweeted that "As the country steps into the next phase of lockdown, @FitIndiaOff and @cbseindia29 have come together to organize #fitness sessions online for school children. @KirenRijiju invites all students, parents and teachers to join this unique initiative from April 15 at 9.30am."

NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences) introduced guidelines that define a framework to address the mental health needs of healthcare personnel in Covid-19 treatment settings. The guidelines also endeavor to provide technical inputs to guide healthcare personnel to help themselves and their colleagues in distress. The guidelines identify the source of anxiety and the indicators that healthcare professionals are facing mental health difficulties at the workplace. During lockdown, NIMHANS Integrated Centre for Yoga has started online yoga classes by in-house experts for stress management. The recorded video is also uploaded on the Union Health Ministry website.¹⁹

According to *India Active's* recent survey of 12,000 gym-goers across the country, 59 per cent of those surveyed expressed their willingness to return to the gym either immediately or within a month of reopening of the gyms.

Once restrictions are lifted, India active reiterated that changes will have to be brought out for workouts such as making temperature checkups, masks, gloves and visors as well the installation of Aarogya Setu app compulsory; reducing the number of members per exercise slots; following social distance;

¹⁷ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/no-more-pumping-iron-burdened-by-lockdown-fitness-industry-seeks-a-way-out-6405428/>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52541157>

¹⁹ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2020/apr/11/breathe-in-breathe-out-nimhans-to-hold-live-yoga-sessions-2128544.html>

discontinuing the use of showers and sauna bath; ensuring that members bring separate gym shoes and disinfecting equipment's, surfaces and washrooms at regular intervals.

Majority of these fitness centres and gyms are registered with MSME, so they sent a letter to Ministry of MSME stating that “the debt continues to rise with no sign of income returning anytime soon, which has already led to massive unemployment and business loss for the entire ecosystem.” The gyms are also urging clients to pre-buy their memberships to help sustain their business, especially the smaller gyms, and stop them from shutting. Free of cost online classes over Facebook, Instagram and Zoom, are also being provided by the gyms to regular customers.

A recent survey of 331 gyms in Mumbai and Delhi conducted by India Active, approximately 55 percent respondents said their businesses would not survive if the shutdown continued past June. Those respondents rose to 71.9 per cent and 88.52 per cent when asked to rate their chances of survival if conditions persisted in July and August, correspondingly.

Personal trainers who invested their whole life in fitness centres are going through tough times without low or no incomes. They have become unemployed and only senior trainers are able to retain their few clients to earn some money for their survival. For eg: Senior and experienced trainers like *Das* are providing services to their client through online classes. Junior personal trainers and general trainers don't have any clients at the moment because they do not have the contacts and experience that seniors do have. *Das* said, “many junior trainers have been calling me asking for clients who they can train online. But when I am struggling for clients myself, I do not know how to help someone else.” Prior to lockdown, *Das* had 12 clients but now he is having only three clients with him. The reasons for losing clients as per *Das* are depression among clients, lack of motivation due to corona virus and clients themselves are facing financial difficulties. To improve his income *Das* decided to take on additional clients by training a small group of people remotely at a discounted rate.

According to *Fitternity*, there are around 24,000 gyms and studios in the country. To sustain themselves they are trying to adapt different approaches like providing online training sessions or classes over WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype, Facebook, FaceTime and other channels of social media. The employees involved in fitness industry like personal trainers, fitness instructors, maintenance personnel, sweepers and other staffs related to gym have been laid off because of bankruptcy within gyms.

INCREASING TREND OF CYCLING AMID COVID-19

During corona virus gyms were shut down and to fight the virus strong immunity is needed. Thus, to enhance their immunity along with following social distance many people took to cycling to keep themselves healthy and fit. *Gaurav Wadha*, a cycle shop owner in Delhi who has been involved in this business since last 55 years says that demand for high end bikes (above Rs 20,000) increased by 300%. Geared bikes are more preferred than non-geared. In India, where cycle is a social determinant of status, having a geared bike shows higher status of a person.²⁰

All India Cycle Manufacturer's Association (AICMA) recorded 25% increase in sale of cycles during month of June as compared to previous year. The increasing demand of cycles led to long bookings to get a bicycle because of demand supply mismatch.²¹ In Delhi, the closure of public transport such as metro and reducing carrying capacity of passenger buses to 20, forced the people to opt for private vehicles. But many nature lovers and who are worried about deteriorating environment opt for cycling. The Union

²⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/india-sees-a-bicycle-boom-post-pandemic/article32661457.ece>

²¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-more-people-are-taking-up-cycling/articleshow/76886429.cms>

Ministry of Urban affairs and Housing advised that we should use this crisis as an opportunity and instead of using diesel and petrol vehicles for commuting, we should use cycle and non-polluting vehicles to keep our environment clean and healthy. To create dedicated cycle tracks would take time, but for the time being Delhi could experiment with popup cycle lanes which means carving lanes for cyclists through tapes, cones and other temporary measures. Whereas dedicated cycle tracks will attract more people towards cycling as they are safer. In Amritsar also road encircling *VR Ambarsar Mall* has been converted into cycle track where people gather in the morning and evening to do cycling.

Cities around the world are leveraging the opportunity to expand their cycling networks and Public Bicycle-Sharing systems. Initiatives taken worldwide during pandemic to promote cycling are:

1. New York added 40 miles of cycle lanes to its network.
2. Paris is creating 650 km of bicycle lanes.
3. In Milan, Italy, 22 miles of streets converted into cycle lanes.
4. Auckland, New Zealand, removed street car parking to build 17 km of temporary bike lanes.
5. Bogota, Colombia, added 76 km lane for cycles overnight.
6. Public bike sharing increased by 150% in China.²²

In India, *Cycle 4 Change Challenge* initiative by Smart city mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban affairs is aimed at inspiring Indian cities to implement quick cycling friendly interventions in the wake of Covid-19. The need for private transport is expected to increase as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For e.g. Kolkata has proposed to build a dedicated cycle corridor by reclaiming parking spaces. In Guwahati, the Green lane Foundation, with the support of the Bicycle Mayor of Guwahati and Pedal for a Change, is conducting a survey for citizens to vote for the best routes for bicycle lanes in the city. City on Pedals started an initiative called Amritsar Heritage Bicycle tour to explore the heritage and culture of Amritsar within the narrow lanes and streets of the city.²³

A recent survey by the *ITDP India Programme* shows that cycling would increase by 50-65% as cities come out of lockdown. The India Programme of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) will be the knowledge partner of the Smart Cities Mission to assist the Mission in conducting this challenge and guiding cities in developing and implementing their proposals.

Cities would be encouraged to create extensive cycling-networks using low-cost methods like pop-up cycle lanes, non-motorized zones and set up community-led cycle rental schemes. In the longer term, the Smart Cities Mission encourages cities to convert temporary interventions into permanent.

The Challenge is open to all cities under the Smart Cities Mission, capital cities of States/UTs, and all cities with a population of more than 5 lakh. The cities from Punjab which are eligible for challenge include Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. The challenge will be implemented in two stages. Stage One will run until 31st January 2020 where cities will focus on piloting quick interventions to promote cycling and developing a scale-up strategy. Under second stage, 11 cities will be shortlisted and will receive Rs. 1 Crore award and guidance from national and international experts to further scale-up the initiative.²⁴

Further, increasing cycling can help cities in a green economic recovery. Investments in cycling infrastructure have economic benefits of up to 5.5 times the initial investment. Cycling for short distances can result in an annual benefit of Rs. 1.8 trillion to the Indian economy.

²² <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-india-is-turning-to-cycles-again/articleshow/76380819.cms>

²³ <https://cityonpedals.com/tours/amritsar-heritage-bicycle-tour>

²⁴ smartnet.niua.org/indiacyclechallenge/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/04112020-C4C-Brief.pdf

SOP'S REGARDING REOPENING OF GYMS

Government decided to relax the restrictions imposed during lockdown in a phased manner. The physical activity through yoga and gyms helps people to keep themselves healthy and fit. Hence, government decided to open yoga institutes and gyms from 5 August, 2020 onwards under Unlock-3.0. But these institutes will have to follow certain protocols and prevention measures to avoid the spread of corona virus. Document containing *Guidelines on Preventive Measures to Contain Spread of COVID-19 in Yoga Institutes & Gymnasium* has been issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The guidelines include both generic and specific preventive measures to control the spread of corona virus. The aim of the guidelines is to minimize all possible physical contacts between staff, members and visitors and to maintain social distancing and other preventive and safety measures in context of COVID-19.

General Preventive measures – All those institutes out of the containment zone will be only allowed to open up. Persons above 65 years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years are advised not to use gyms in closed spaces. These measures need to be observed by all members, visitors and staff in these institutes at all times. These include:

1. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
2. Practice frequent hand washing with soap even when hands are not visibly dirty. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be practiced wherever reasonable.
3. Use of masks is mandatory at all times within the premises. However, during yoga exercise or exercising in gymnasiums, as far as possible only a visor may be used.
4. Spitting should be strictly prohibited.
5. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet as far as possible.
6. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest to state and district helpline.
7. Installation & use of Aarogya Setu App shall be advised to all.²⁵

Specific Measures – Specific guidelines have been provided in two sets i.e. measures to be followed before the opening of gyms and the measures to be followed after the opening of yoga institutes and gymnasium.

A) Before opening of yoga institutes and gymnasium following specific measures should be kept in mind:

1. Processes & premises redesigning including proper placement of equipments
2. Disinfection
3. Planning and Scheduling of Activities
4. Availability and Management of Supplies

B) After opening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums following measures should be followed:

1. At the entry point
2. Prior to exercising in the gymnasiums using equipment for cardio, strength training etc.
3. During yoga exercises / other exercise sessions
4. After exercise and in common areas
5. At the time of closure

In the post COVID-19 world, the fitness industry world-over is set to witness a major change with prime focus on social distancing and hygiene measures. The gyms will have to accept new normal. When gyms

²⁵ <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Guidelinesonyogainstitutesandgymnasiums03082020.pdf>

do finally re-open, capacity is likely to be reduced by half to maintain the 6 feet distancing, while personal trainers will have to give advice from a distance, digital apps will be developed, social media will be utilized, etc. At-home workouts and online fitness training sessions are becoming more prominent among fitness enthusiasts or fitness seekers. Hence, the fitness industry will be moving more towards digitalization of fitness products and services in near future.

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