

# **INDIAN CLUB SWINGING IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY INDIA AND ENGLAND**

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**A Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of  
Philosophy in Historical Studies at the University of Cambridge**

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**FACULTY OF HISTORY  
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## **Abstract**

Indian clubs are bottle-shaped weighted clubs swung in the hand for gymnastic exercise. Despite their obscure status in modern culture, the clubs were one of the most recognizable items of fitness equipment in nineteenth and early-twentieth century India and England. Originating in India, the clubs' nineteenth and early twentieth-century history is one of remarkable complexity. Adopted by civil and military colonisers in India in the early nineteenth-century, club swinging became a means of maintaining England's project in India, a means of subjugating Indian men as well as means of challenging negative colonial stereotypes. Likewise in England, Indian clubs were used to challenge, create and reinvigorate ideas about embodied gender identities. Indian clubs can thus be viewed as a historical vessel containing converging colonial, gender and political histories. Adopted by soldiers, nationalists, exercisers and even suffragists, the clubs' continuity and varied use demonstrate the fluidity of gender identities in India and England during this period. Utilising the conceptual framework of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the current study seeks to answer how English colonisers and the wider English public rationalised adopting an Indian form of exercise, especially that of a Hindu race often considered as effeminate. Similarly the work is interested in understanding how the adoption of Indian club swinging in Indian and English exercise regimens reinforced or challenged prevailing gender stereotypes. Finally, the work examines the extent to which Indian clubs became a politicised form of exercise with regards to the Hindu physical culture and English suffragist movements.

In answering these questions, the thesis argues that Indian club swinging was a method of masculine and feminine identity formation for numerous exercisers in both India and England. Demonstrating how club swinging was used to negotiate masculine and feminine identities during this period, the dissertation thus presents an original contribution to the literature on Indian clubs as well as impacting upon histories of the Hindu physical culture movement, nineteenth-century English exercise and the English suffragist movement.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

**RAPTC** – Royal Army Physical Training Corps

**WFL** - Women’s Freedom League

**WSPU** – Women’s Social and Political Union

## Introduction

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Indian clubs are bottle-shaped weighted clubs swung in the hand for gymnastic exercise. Despite their obscure status in modern culture, the clubs were one of the most recognizable items of fitness equipment in nineteenth and early-twentieth century India and England. Originating in India, the clubs' nineteenth and early twentieth-century history is one of remarkable complexity. Adopted by civil and military colonisers in India in the early nineteenth-century, club swinging became a means of both subjugating Indian men and a means by which Indian men challenged colonial stereotypes. Likewise in England, Indian clubs were used to challenge, create and reinvigorate embodied gender identities. Indian clubs can thus be viewed as a historical vessel containing converging colonial, gender and political histories. Adopted by soldiers, nationalists, exercisers and even suffragists, the clubs' continuity and varied use demonstrate the fluidity of gender identities in India and England during this period

This dissertation analyses the history of Indian clubs and the act of club swinging to understand changes in larger societal trends in nineteenth and early twentieth-century England and India. Inspired by Bourdieu's assertion that "the body is in the social world but the social world is in the body", the dissertation examines how the physical bodies of Indian and English exercisers became imbued with ideas about correct forms of masculinity and femininity.<sup>1</sup> While scholars have applied this approach to fashion, sport and commerce, histories on Indian clubs have tended to neglect its gender elements in favour of more Rankian-Actonian historical approaches.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the first work on the subject, Rajagopalan's *A brief history of physical education in India* (1962), merely noted club swinging's existence in the West in the early twentieth-century.<sup>3</sup> Focused primarily on traditional Indian practices, Rajagopalan missed the opportunity to analyse why western exercisers trained with the clubs, an oversight continued by many scholars.<sup>4</sup> In his 1978 work, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, Haley noted that in the early nineteenth-century English soldiers used Indian clubs

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge, 2000), 152.

<sup>2</sup> Dror Wahrman, *The making of the modern self: Identity and culture in eighteenth-century England* (Yale, 2006), 43-85; J.A. Mangan, 'With Sports Masculine', in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender* (London, 2000), 1-4; John Tosh, 'Masculinities in an industrializing society: Britain, 1800-1914', *The Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005), 330-342.

<sup>3</sup> Krishnaswamy Rajagopalan, *A Brief History of Physical Education in India. Reflections on Physical Education* (Delhi, 1962), 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

due to their admiration for the physiques it produced.<sup>5</sup> While Haley's opus did much to highlight the Victorian obsession with health, his comments on Indian clubs merely noted their existence.

Two decades after Haley's work, anthropologist Joseph Alter became the first scholar on the topic to note Indian clubs' relationship with gender. Despite his primary interest in modern-day Indian wrestling, Alter briefly explored Hindu wrestlers' use of Indian clubs to project a masculine image that was confident, strong and controlled.<sup>6</sup> Though Alter presented a strong case for Indian clubs as an object of gender building, those writing after Alter, such as Todd, favoured more factual forms of enquiry. Writing in 1995, Todd undertook extensive study of club training manuals to examine how people trained with the clubs across several decades. Highly relevant for the current work's interests was Todd's transatlantic history of the clubs.<sup>7</sup> Far from an Indian and British story, Todd's work showcased the rich North American dimension to the clubs.<sup>8</sup>

Disappointingly from a historical point of view, the only monograph written on Indian clubs was produced for those interested in purchasing them as folk art. Regardless of its motives, Hoffman's (1996) *Indian Clubs* did contribute to the historiographical landscape. Alter aside, Hoffman was unique in noting the strong religious connection between Indian clubs and Hinduism.<sup>9</sup> This, as will be shown, was an important factor for the Hindu physical culture movement, which arose in the 1860s and sought to use indigenous forms of exercise to reinvigorate middle-class Hindu men.<sup>10</sup> Also significant was Hoffman's observation that soon after their western adoption, Indian clubs' origins were forgotten to the extent that commentators often confused them with bowling pins or Native American weapons.<sup>11</sup> This 'western amnesia' was re-iterated in Alter's (2004) article 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism', which attempted to explain this phenomenon through MacAloon's theory of 'empty forms' of sport. In doing so, Alter postulated that Indian clubs were quickly emptied of their old

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce Haley, *The healthy body and Victorian culture* (Cambridge, 1978), 137.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Alter, *The Wrestlers Body* (California, 1992), 62-65.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Todd, 'From Milo to Milo: A History of Barbells, Dumbbells, and Indian Clubs', *Iron Game History* 3 (1995), 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Alice Hoffman, *Indian Clubs* (New York, 1996), 6.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter One, Section Three.

<sup>11</sup> Hoffman, *Indian Clubs*, 44.

meanings by English troops and refilled with new significance.<sup>12</sup> Under Alter's highly theoretical interpretation, this 'western amnesia' was placed within a larger colonial dialogue in which Englishmen and women often appropriated Indian practices. The current work will attempt to apply a source-based evidence for the MacAloon thesis.

Following his discussion of 'western amnesia', Alter returned to the subject of Indian clubs and masculinity, arguing that for Hindu men, club swinging was linked directly to celibacy and semen retention. A form of gender building that Alter felt was echoed by Victorian and later English interests in cultivating self-discipline through exercise.<sup>13</sup> Highly anthropological, Alter's article nevertheless highlighted serious gaps in the historical literature, such as the failure to explain how English troops rationalised adopting a Hindu exercise, the failure to account for Indian clubs' English popularity and the failure to explore what the English appropriation of Indian clubs meant for Hindus.<sup>14</sup> Although presented with a series of research questions, historians have yet to adequately respond. Since 2004 those historians examining Indian clubs have repeated past narratives completely lacking in analytical discussion about the clubs' historical significance.<sup>15</sup>

Addressing several of the gaps identified by Alter, the dissertation will thus do two things. First it will examine why British colonisers appropriated Indian clubs and what ramifications this had in India. Second it will examine how Indian and English exercisers used club swinging to both confirm and challenge ideas about masculinity and femininity. From Connell's and Butler's respective works on gender, the dissertation treats gender identities as malleable, socially constructed and multiplicitous.<sup>16</sup> Using such theories, the dissertation seeks to answer how English colonisers and the wider English public rationalised adopting an Indian form of exercise, especially that of a Hindu race often considered as effeminate. Similarly the work is interested in understanding how the adoption of Indian club swinging in Indian and English exercise regimens reinforced or challenged prevailing gender stereotypes.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46 (2004), 501.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>15</sup> Roy Shephard, *An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness* (Toronto, 2015), 646.

<sup>16</sup> R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power* (Sydney, 1987); R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, 2005), 45-64; Judith Butler, 'Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory', *Theatre journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519-531; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London, 1990).

Finally, the work examines the extent to which Indian clubs became a politicised form of exercise with regards to the Hindu physical culture and English suffragist movements.

In answering these questions, the thesis argues that Indian club swinging was intimately related to constructions of gender for Indian and English exercisers during this period. This argument presents an original contribution to the historiography of Indian clubs while also impacting upon wider Indian and English historiographical discussions on gender. Regarding the former, it is envisioned that this research will be of interest to those studying the Hindu physical culture movement which emerged in the 1860s and sought to use sport and fitness as a means of challenging colonial claims that middle-class Bengal men were effeminate. Previously, historians have examined how Indian nationalists pursued western and indigenous sporting practices to challenge these claims. Such works have advanced understandings of sport's Indian significance yet have oftentimes neglected the importance of physical training.<sup>17</sup> While wrestling matches between Indian and English wrestlers during this period have received considerable attention, training methods used prior to such bouts have been overlooked.<sup>18</sup> Studying club swinging by Indian nationalists from the 1860s can thus shed light on the daily practices undertaken to prepare for these bouts and shift attention away from the field of contest to the field of training, where countless hours were spent in preparation. Examining such training bolsters the already impressive literature on sport and the Hindu physical culture movement as it reveals the public and private importance of indigenous training practices.

Regarding English historiography, the dissertation speaks to those works detailing physical training's importance for ideas of masculinity and femininity. Beginning with Haley in 1978, historians examining health in Victorian England have made great strides in demonstrating the influence of societal trends in determining how people exercised.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, early scholars of masculinity, such as Mangan and Holt, demonstrated how team sports in Victorian and Edwardian England became tied to wider trends such as 'muscular Christianity', colonialism,

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Dimeo, 'Colonial bodies, Colonial sport', *The international journal of the history of sport*, 19:1 (2002), 72-90; Boria Majumdar, *Cricket in Colonial India 1780-1947* (London, 2013); J. Alter, 'Kabaddi, a National Sport of India: The Internationalism of Nationalism and the Foreignness of Indianness' in N. Dyck (ed.), *Games, Sports and Cultures* (Oxford, 2000), 81-116.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's body: sex, diet, and the politics of nationalism* (Pennsylvania, 2000), 125-140; Mark Singleton, *Yoga body: The origins of modern posture practice* (Oxford, 2010), 96-109.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Bailey, 'Leisure, culture and the historian: reviewing the first generation of leisure historiography in Britain', *Leisure Studies*, 8:2 (1989), 107-127.

and perceptions of degeneracy.<sup>20</sup> These initial studies helped elevate sport's standing within wider historical discussions and paved the way for nuanced studies such as Huggins's piece on middle-class sporting pursuits, which argued that sport was a method of both confirming and challenging ideas about middle-class masculinity.<sup>21</sup> Such studies compliment works on English femininity, which have long considered exercise and gender as a subject of enquiry. Beginning with Fletcher in the 1980s and continuing to the present, historians of femininity have successfully demonstrated how exercise was used as a means of subjugating women based upon medical and societal ideals about their frailty.<sup>22</sup> Likewise scholars have illustrated how women used exercise to actively challenge such assumptions.<sup>23</sup> This dissertation seeks to apply such theories to Indian club swinging, and in doing so, examine the motivations behind Englishmen and women's decision to undertake this solitary form of exercise. Many historians have noted the existence of Indian clubs in England during the period studied, yet few have analysed why the clubs were used and with what intent.<sup>24</sup> The current dissertation addresses this oversight.

Stemming from a focus on Englishwomen and exercise, the dissertation also contributes to historiographical discussions on the English suffragist movement, specifically the Women's Social and Political Union's (WSPU) clashes with police, which saw the WSPU use Indian clubs as weapons. The suffragist appropriation of the clubs stemmed from the WSPU's political protests and interest in jujutsu. These factors contributed to the establishment of a WSPU bodyguard in 1913, which sought to protect WSPU leaders, in particular Emmeline Pankhurst, using Indian clubs and other weapons. While writings on the suffragist movement date to the early twentieth-century when key figures penned their autobiographies, historians have tended to note the WSPU's bodyguard and jujutsu training only in passing.<sup>25</sup> Thus, although a series of historians have written on the WSPU's militant campaigns from which

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<sup>20</sup> J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school* (Cambridge, 1981); Richard Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Mike Huggins and J.A. Mangan, *Disreputable pleasures* (London, 2004), 1-20.

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Vertinsky, 'Re-examining *Women First*: Rewriting the history of 'an end to an era'', in David Kirk and Patricia Vertinsky (eds.), *The Female Tradition in Physical Education: Women First Reconsidered* (London, 2016), 1-20.

<sup>23</sup> James Lee, *The lady footballers: struggling to play in Victorian Britain* (London, 2013); Michelle Beissel Heath, 'Not All Ridges and Furrows and 'Uncroquetable Lawns': Croquet, Female Citizenship, and 1860s Domestic Chronicles', *Critical Survey*, 24:1 (2012), 43-56.

<sup>24</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (London, 1996), 224; John Lowerson, *Sport and the English middle classes, 1870-1914* (Manchester, 1995), 12; Kenneth R. Dutton, *The perfectible body: The Western ideal of male physical development* (New York, 1995), 100; Catriona M. Parratt, *More Than Mere Amusement: Working-class Women's Leisure in England, 1750-1914* (Boston, 2001), 207.

<sup>25</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London, 1914).

the bodyguard stemmed, the vital connection between suffragism and exercise has been neglected.<sup>26</sup> Kay brought this to historians' attention in 2008, when she noted that despite what early autobiographies may have indicated, numerous suffragists displayed a strong affinity for physical exercise, both recreationally and politically.<sup>27</sup> Historians have yet to address this issue and it is telling that in 2014 Williams felt that the history of the WSPU and physical culture had yet to be written.<sup>28</sup> Examining the WSPU's jujutsu training and martial use of Indian clubs can therefore shed light on the importance of physical culture and exercise for the WSPU in the pre-war period.

Though the dissertation speaks to several historiographical fields, its primary concern is the reinforcing and reimagining of gender identities through the body and its training. As such the dissertation utilises French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual tools of 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field'. First identified by Bourdieu in 1958, habitus can be understood as the dispositions that internalise our social location and orient our actions.<sup>29</sup> It is thus concerned with the study of bodily movements for the purpose of extrapolating wider societal trends.<sup>30</sup> Under such a lens, club swinging is not an innocuous affair but rather a social and political phenomenon. Englishmen swung Indian clubs differently to Indian soldiers, who swung clubs differently to Hindu wrestlers. Similarly, Englishmen swung clubs differently to Englishwomen. This dissertation contends that differences in training and training apparatus displayed entrenched ideological ideas about gender and colonialism.<sup>31</sup> Although Bourdieu distinguished between habitus acquired during one's childhood and that developed later in life, the dissertation focuses solely on the secondary form of habitus, acquired through purposeful training.<sup>32</sup> Whereas habitus acquired during childhood is usually concerned with

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<sup>26</sup> Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London, 1973); Andrew Rosen, *Rise up, women!: the Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1914* (London, 2013); Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The militant suffrage movement: citizenship and resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford, 2003). Interestingly, a recent work on jujutsu and suffragism in the US did provide some passing insights into the English context. See Wendy Rouse and Beth Slutsky, 'Empowering the Physical and Political Self: Women and the Practice of Self-Defense, 1890-1920', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 13:4 (2014), 470-499.

<sup>27</sup> Joyce Kay, 'It wasn't just Emily Davison! Sport, suffrage and society in Edwardian Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25:10 (2008), 1338-1354.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One: Sporting Women, 1850-1960* (London, 2014), 84.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1958); G., Noble and M., Watkins, 'So, how did Bourdieu learn to play tennis?', *Cultural studies*, 17:3-4 (2003), 522.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic Of Practice* (Cambridge, 1990), 12 & 74.

<sup>31</sup> Christine Mennesson, 'Gender regimes and habitus: An avenue for analyzing gender building in sports contexts', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 29:1 (2012), 4-21.

<sup>32</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London, 1977), 42-46.

survival, the secondary form is more concerned with social advancement and standing.<sup>33</sup> Why people devoted hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of hours to build or improve their club swinging ‘habitus’, and to what effect, is a subject of intense interest in the current work.

Habitus is directly related to the capital or societal value attached to it.<sup>34</sup> While concurring with Marx’s view that economic capital was important, Bourdieu also highlighted the importance of cultural, social and physical capital.<sup>35</sup> For this dissertation, the metaphors of cultural and physical capital are primarily utilised. Cultural capital refers to anything that can be converted into economic capital such as one’s education or specialised skills.<sup>36</sup> Oftentimes in India and England, the ability to swing Indian clubs proficiently offered employment possibilities as a physical education instructor.<sup>37</sup> Thus the ability to garner cultural capital and prestige through Indian clubs was no trivial affair.<sup>38</sup> Physical capital refers to the means in which the body can be used to garner economic capital, in the form of employment, or social capital, in the form of prestige.<sup>39</sup> As the dissertation discusses, many undertook club swinging to attain greater economic or social capital owing to improvements in their body. If habitus allows the study of the body and its movements, capital provides a frame of societal reference.<sup>40</sup>

Habitus and capital are relevant only within specific contexts or fields. For Bourdieu, societies can be conceptualized as an array of relatively autonomous but interrelated fields of production, circulation, and consumption with various forms of cultural and material resources.<sup>41</sup> In their daily lives individuals encounter and contribute to the upkeep of several fields.<sup>42</sup> Hence a Victorian Indian club enthusiast encountered numerous commercial,

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<sup>33</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Cambridge, 1984), 65-68.

<sup>34</sup> N., Crossley, *The Social Body* (London, 2001), 96.

<sup>35</sup> L. Hunter, W. Smith and E. Emerald, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and his Conceptual Tools’, in Wayne Smith (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu and Physical Culture* (London, 2014), 13; C. Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London, 2003), 58.

<sup>36</sup> L. Hunter, W. Smith and E. Emerald, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and his Conceptual Tools’, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Chapter Two, Section Two and Chapter Three, Section Two, examine how Englishwomen found employment owing to their Indian club habitus.

<sup>38</sup> Historians of English femininity have long argued that specialized athletic knowledge was an area of significant cultural capital for women. Cartriona M. Parratt, ‘Athletic “Womanhood: Exploring sources for female sport in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *Journal of Sport History*, 16:2 (1989), 141-145.

<sup>39</sup> Shilling, *The Body*, 58.

<sup>40</sup> Bourdieu envisioned capital and habitus as directly impacting upon one another. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 101.

<sup>41</sup> D. Swartz, *Culture & Power* (Chicago, 1997), 120.

<sup>42</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 30.

familial, sporting and consumptive fields in their daily routine.<sup>43</sup> Reflecting this, the dissertation studies the health, fitness, education, colonial and martial fields among others. Although there is a temptation to emulate Coles in mapping out gender as a field in its own right, the dissertation follows feminist scholars in assuming that gender enters into the ‘game’ of different social fields in ways specific to that field.<sup>44</sup> Thus a Victorian woman in an English gymnasium interacted with that field in a way she would not in the commerce field. In the case of club swinging, it is argued that the public and private spaces in which the practice occurred allowed actors to challenge gender identities specific to that field. As will be shown, Hindu men were able to elevate their status within the fitness field relative to Englishmen while still occupying lower positions in other fields.<sup>45</sup> Inversely, some Englishmen and women swung clubs to project an image of masculinity or femininity in both health and wider societal fields.<sup>46</sup>

Through three related, though distinct chapters, Bourdieu’s concepts are utilised to examine the extent to which Indian clubs were used to challenge, confirm or create, masculine and feminine identities in India and England from the beginning of the nineteenth-century to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. This period of time encapsulates the introduction, rise and fall of Indian clubs’ social and political significance in Indian and English society. Focusing on pre-colonial and colonial India, Chapter One begins with Indian clubs’ pre-colonial history as depicted in religious, military and health texts to establish the club’s importance prior to the British appropriation of the exercise. Following this, colonial motivations for appropriating club swinging and the ramifications of this action are examined through contemporary medical and army reports. Having established the clubs’ pre-colonial significance and British motivations for using them, the chapter’s final section examines two concurrent club swinging practices in India in the post-Rebellion period. The first, by the British army, saw clubs used primarily as a means of disciplining and reforming ‘unruly’ Indian soldiers. The second, by the Hindu physical culture movement, sought to use Indian clubs to challenge colonial ideas about Hindu men through public sporting events.

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<sup>43</sup> Simon Gunn, ‘Translating Bourdieu: Cultural Capital and the English Middle Class in Historical Perspective’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56:1 (2005), 49-64.

<sup>44</sup> Tony Coles, ‘Negotiating the Field of Masculinity’, *Men and Masculinities*, 12:1 (2009), 30-44; Beate Kraus, ‘Gender, sociological theory and Bourdieu’s sociology of practice’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23:6 (2006), 128.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter One, Section Three.

<sup>46</sup> Chapters Two and Three focus extensively on the use of Indian clubs to reinforce or reimagine English ideals of masculinity and femininity.

Having thoroughly examined the Indian context in Chapter One, Chapter Two focuses on the introduction of Indian clubs in England, their initial uses and how they became popular amongst England's upper and middle-classes prior to 1870.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, the conditions which made Indian clubs' acceptance in England possible are discussed with reference to medical, martial and exercise texts, thereby exploring the clubs' initial English influences. Following this, the first club swinging texts and their significance regarding femininity and masculinity are explored with reference to their popularity and reception. Although those using Indian clubs from 1830 to 1850 normally stemmed from England's upper and upper-middle classes, club swinging's popularity spread to the wider middle-classes from the 1850s owing to changes in institutional and recreational settings.<sup>48</sup> The wider middle-class interest in Indian clubs brought with it new prescriptions for masculinity and femininity as espoused through training manuals, a topic examined in the chapter's final section.

Chapter Three explores the various strands of Indian club swinging amongst predominantly middle-class men and women from 1870 to 1914. Although the last quarter of the nineteenth-century would see club swinging emerge as one of the era's most recognisable fitness fads, the post-1900 period saw Indian clubs' popularity wane dramatically owing to physical culture's emergence in England alongside societal changes following the South African War (1899-1902). Nevertheless, in 1914 the clubs briefly returned to public attention when it was revealed that the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) were using Indian clubs as weapons in their clashes with police. In examining the rise, fall and re-emergence of Indian clubs from 1870 to 1914, considerable attention is paid to the plethora of gender identities attached to the clubs during the height of their popularity and how such identities came to be out-dated compared to the physical culture movement from the 1900s onwards. Following this, the suffragist-Indian club relationship is examined within the context of the WSPU's militant campaigns alongside the group's relationship with physical culture and jujutsu. While women had long used Indian clubs to challenge ideas of femininity, none had done so as forcefully as the WSPU, making their usage a special case.

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<sup>47</sup> This thesis understands upper-class as referring to the nobility, those who for generations had inherited lands along with titles and the landed gentry. Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, 2007), 5. Middle-class is understood as "all employers, all non-manual employees and all (apart from the landed aristocracy and gentry) people supported by independent income." Richard Trainer, 'The Middle Class', in Martin J. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), 673-714.

<sup>48</sup> Histories of gender in Victorian England are inevitably concerned with economic class. As Sarah Richardson noted, gender and class in Victorian England were so intimately tied together that one cannot speak of one without the other. Sarah Richardson, 'Politics and Genders, in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to 19th-Century Britain* (Swansea, 2006), 174.

As Indian clubs are a relatively untapped area of research within the English and Indian context, the current dissertation was given considerable freedom to explore an eclectic collection of archival and printed works. Regarding archival work, the dissertation made significant use of the British Library's collection of medical, martial and educational sources alongside smaller collections in the Tyne and Wear Archives, the Royal Army Physical Training Corps Museum, the Royal Archives and the Victoria and Albert Museum, to understand how English exercisers first encountered Indian clubs and what they expected to gain from its practice. Admittedly, the dissertation also benefited greatly from what McClellan termed "serendipity in historical research."<sup>49</sup> A chance visit to a London antiques shop resulted in the photograph of Professor Harrison's nineteenth-century Indian club discussed in chapter two, while informal conversations secured the photograph of the twelfth-century *Chennakesava Temple* shown in chapter one. Away from archival work, the dissertation studied both governmental and informal published works to foreground the archival sources in the writings of their time. In India and England, numerous government and committee reports were published on the use of Indian clubs in classrooms, military training systems and in gymnasia. Such sources illustrated the perceived health problems of the age and were complimented by the works of lay authors. Beginning in the seventeenth-century English writers began recording the practice of club swinging, which by the nineteenth-century had become a familiar mode of activity for English exercisers. Seeking to understand English understandings of the practice, the dissertation utilised numerous journals, newspapers, monographs, travel diaries and of course, Indian club training manuals.

Although the dissertation's source base represents the most extensive work to date on Indian clubs, time and financial constraints have presented a number of limitations. In the Indian context, a reliance on sources produced by the colonial state, as opposed to indigenous records, posed interpretational limitations regarding indigenous uses of Indian clubs. Circumventing this limitation, the dissertation focused primarily on changes in English perceptions of the exercise over time. When discussing indigenous interactions with Indian clubs, the dissertation was guided by an extensive analysis of the secondary literature. Within the English context, two limitations within the source base exist. First that many popular works on Indian clubs sought to sell the clubs' benefits and second that many texts explicitly linked the exercise to social class. Regarding the former, while there is little doubt that for

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<sup>49</sup> James E. McClellan, 'Accident, luck, and serendipity in historical research', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 149:1 (2005), 1-21.

many club swinging was beneficial, efforts to relay this to audiences oftentimes bordered on the hyperbolic. Seeing past the ‘smoke and mirrors’ of nineteenth-century training manuals required extensive cross-referencing between contemporary lay and medical texts to determine the health benefits of the exercise, something which became more difficult as Indian clubs’ popularity increased amongst the public and decreased with physicians. Similarly limiting was the tendency for training manuals to link Indian clubs to social class. Writing in the 1830s, Walker explicitly targeted upper and upper-middle class exercisers. Three decades later Harrison targeted the middle-class. While late nineteenth and early twentieth-century texts were less prescriptive about class, there was a tendency to negate the working-class exerciser in favour of the middle or upper-class. Those few sources, which referenced the working-class, did so from a position of attempting to improve their discipline or health.<sup>50</sup> Such works were written about, rather than for, the working-class exerciser, something in contrast to other domains of contemporary fitness literature.<sup>51</sup> Hence despite nine-months thorough research, no explicitly working-class sources were found. The absence of a working-class voice has limited the extent to which the dissertation can examine working-class engagement with the exercise, and, owing to a dearth in the primary literature, their inclusion in the dissertation is unfortunately limited.

Limitations aside, the sources used have allowed the dissertation to study the importance of Indian clubs in a variety of public and private settings in England and colonial India. While such settings have been alluded to in previous works, the current dissertation explores the clubs’ importance in a much greater manner and demonstrates how Indian clubs were used to embody or challenge specified gender identities. In this way, the sources used demonstrate that Indian clubs were more than just an ephemeral fitness item but instead, a cultural phenomenon worthy of historians’ attention.

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<sup>50</sup> Such sources were generally educational, military or prison records written from the perspective of those in charge of the working-class exercisers as opposed to the individual themselves.

<sup>51</sup> The physical culture movement, discussed in Section Three, Chapter Three did this to an extent.

## Chapter One: Indian clubs in India

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In the early seventeenth-century British travellers to India began noting the local practice of Indian club swinging, which at first glance, was unlike anything they had previously encountered. Yet within two centuries, British colonisers were not only familiar with club swinging, they had adopted it for themselves. A form of exercise that for Indians carried strong religious, militaristic and masculine connotations was remodelled into a tool for military practices with new and diverse meanings. As the British army stationed in India began to incorporate club swinging into its training regimes from the latter half of the nineteenth-century, the Hindu physical culture movement seized upon traditional forms of club swinging to distinguish themselves from British men through the cultivation of muscular and strong bodies. By the twentieth-century, club swinging was simultaneously reinforcing and challenging colonial identities surrounding Hindu men. To fully understand Indian clubs' nineteenth-century story, section one examines the clubs' pre-colonial context with reference to religious, military and exercise texts in a bid to establish the club's importance prior to the British uptake. Stemming from this, section two analyses colonial motivations for the appropriation of club swinging alongside the ramifications of this action. Once club swinging became an English physical practice in its own right, it was used to train, discipline and in many ways denigrate Indian troops. Concurrently as the army was using Indian clubs to discipline indigenous troops, the Hindu physical culture movement sought to use club swinging as a method of proving their masculinity and worthiness to their colonial masters. This dichotomy between English and Hindu club swinging from the mid nineteenth-century is explored in the Chapter's final section.

### **I**

#### **Gods, Generals and Grappling: Indian clubs' pre-colonial history**

In 1630 a chance encounter between Peter Mundy, an East India Company merchant on his way to Puttana, and a group of local Indian men, resulted in the first written English source on club swinging. A rare respite on a journey fraught with frustration, danger and mismanagement, Mundy momentarily forgot his fatigue to observe the men engage in

indigenous physical culture practices.<sup>1</sup> Initially confusing them with acrobats owing to their athleticism, Mundy was informed by a fellow traveller that they were in fact soldiers. Confusion resolved, the soldiers' practice of engaging in "exercises to harden and enure themselves to labour...[by] tugginge and wrestlinge one with another, tumblinge on the ground, beatinge and thumpinge themselves thereon in a strange manner and posture" left a mark on the Englishman known for his fascination of Indian culture.<sup>2</sup> Later that evening Mundy recorded the display in his diary, a display similar to the contemporary Indian gouache pictured below,

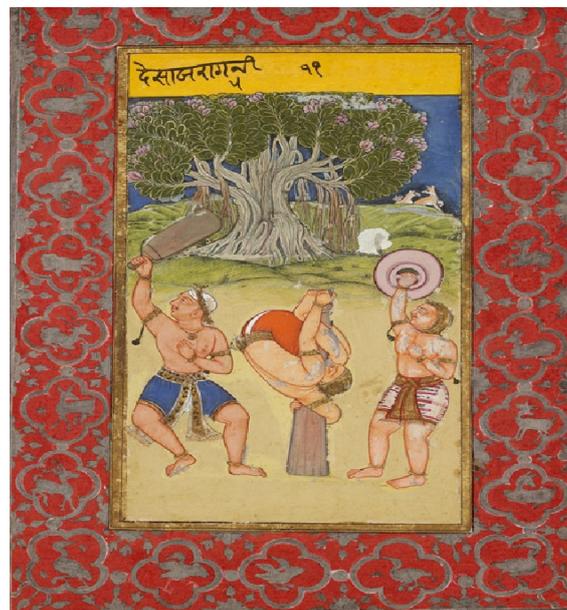


Fig 1.1: 'Wrestlers exercising, illustrating the musical mode Deshakh Ragini, c. 1670', Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art, Accession Number: LI118.120. Available at <http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/collection/6980/9856/0/15059>.

The soldier's heavy equipment and herculean physiques had undoubtedly piqued Mundy's interest, leaving one to wonder how many East Indian Company employees in the seventeenth-century were similarly engaged by these practices.<sup>3</sup> That British men undertook these exercises in later centuries gives some indication that there was indeed a strong interest in such regimens. While many may have initially echoed Mundy's ignorance in such practices' history, the exercisers' meditative habits and stoically built physiques no doubt

<sup>1</sup> Michael Fisher, *Visions of Mughal India: an anthology of European travel writing* (New York, 2007), 76.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Richard Carnac Temple, *The travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, vol. II (Cambridge, 1936), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Antony Wild, *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600* (London, 2000), 73.

indicated the clubs' religious, militaristic and masculine messages, messages that had been forged over centuries.

While Indian clubs appeared in early Buddhist and Jain writings, their religious past is best understood through Hindu texts, such as the *Mahabharata*, written between 400 BCE and 400 CE.<sup>4</sup> Highly allegorical, the text focused on two warring sects, the Pandavas and Kauravas, with their battle a metaphor for life.<sup>5</sup> Though several figures used *gadas*, Indian club precursors, throughout the epic, it was the *gada* battle between Bhima, the king and Duryodhan, the man vying for Bhima's throne, which was highly significant.<sup>6</sup> That each man, famed for his power, wielded Indian clubs linked the clubs to overt images of strength and masculinity. Similarly that Bhima killed Duryodhan with his club demonstrated its destructive capabilities.<sup>7</sup> In the *Mahabharata*, clubs were presented as tools requiring great mastery. Such tools were not confined to mortals as Vishnu, a revered deity, used them also. Vishnu was responsible for forging the original *gada* and it was stemming from Vishnu's association that Indian clubs' identity as a symbol of power and destruction was strengthened.<sup>8</sup> Hanuman's subsequent club use solidified this association. A demigod praised for his devotion to Lord Rama, Hanuman is intensely related to Indian clubs in Hindu texts and iconography.<sup>9</sup> As the Hindu God of wrestling, Hanuman explicitly linked Indian clubs with athleticism, a connection reiterated daily for Indian exercisers, who for centuries, prayed to Hanuman before training.<sup>10</sup> Although a highly masculine tool in Hinduism, the clubs were at times personified in the form of *Gadanari* ('club woman'), a beautiful young woman loyal to Vishnu.<sup>11</sup> That *Gadanari* served Vishnu with undying loyalty, yet never wielded the clubs, is symbolic perhaps of Hinduism's alleged patriarchal nature.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For Buddhist or Jain sources see Soma Basu, *Warfare in Ancient India: An Historical Outline* (Delhi, 2014), 205; for the *Mahabharata* see J. L. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (London, 1998), 160-161.

<sup>5</sup> Shama Dasgupta, 'An inheritance from the British: The Indian boxing story', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 21:3-4 (2004), 431-440.

<sup>6</sup> Pratap Chandra Roy, *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa* (Calcutta, 1884), 37; Kaushik Roy, *Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2012), 21-23.

<sup>7</sup> Roy, *Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Devdutt Pattanaik, *Vishnu: An Introduction* (Mumbai, 1999), 95; Maria Mariottini Spagnoli, 'Some Further Observations on the Symbolic Meaning of the Club in the Statue of Kaniska', *East and West* (1970), 461; Soma Basu, *Warfare in Ancient India*, 205.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (Oxford, 2006), 1-20.

<sup>10</sup> D.C. Mujumdar, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Physical Culture* (Delhi, 1950), 614.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Lerner, *The flame and the lotus: Indian and Southeast Asian art from the Kronos collections* (New York, 1984), 50.

<sup>12</sup> Antony R.H. Copley, *Hinduism in public and private: reform, Hindutva, gender and Sampraday* (Oxford, 2003), 20-22; Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu wife, Hindu nation, community, religion, and cultural nationalism* (Indiana, 2001), 85-90.

Hindu reverence for Indian clubs stemmed from their martial applications and it is interesting to note that the *Mahabharata* was written soon after the Indian *Vedic Age* (1500 – 500 BCE) during which Indian clubs were often used in battle.<sup>13</sup> The emergence of other weapons in the following centuries did little to displace the clubs' battlefield application, although such weapons did signal a change in the clubs' use.<sup>14</sup> While still used in battle, Indian clubs became a training tool during the fifth-century, as demonstrated by the 2003 Italian National Museum of Oriental Art exhibition of a grey schist slab showcasing an ornamental *gada*.<sup>15</sup>



Fig 1.2: 'Fifth-Century Gandharan Gada', National Museum of Oriental Art, Rome, No: 3956/3. Photograph taken by curator.

The schist's heavy weight required considerable strength to move whilst the clubs' ribbons suggest it held some cultural value, indicating that the schist was both a training tool and ornamental decoration.<sup>16</sup> While such objects exist, it was not until the *Manasollasa*'s twelfth-century publication that a written source made the clubs' use for training explicit.<sup>17</sup> Describing contemporary exercises, the text devoted considerable space to wrestling and club swinging, which O'Hanlon argued showcased the relationship between club swinging and military practices.<sup>18</sup> The twelfth-century *Chennakesava* Temple situated in modern-day

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<sup>13</sup> Shankar Nath Das, *Physical Education, Games and Recreation in Early India* (Delhi, 1985), 24-25.

<sup>14</sup> B.P. Singha, 'Art of War in Ancient India (600 BC–300 AD)', in Guy Metraux and François Crouzet (eds.), *Studies in the Cultural History of India* (Agra, 1965), 115–63.

<sup>15</sup> Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50:4 (2007), 488-495.

<sup>16</sup> Angelo Andrea Di Castro, 'A late Gandharan wrestlers' weight', *East and West* (2003), 257-265.

<sup>17</sup> Abhijit Gupta, 'Cultures of the Body in Colonial Bengal: The Career of Gobor Guha', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29:12 (2012), 1689.

<sup>18</sup> Ronojoy Sen, *Nation at Play: A History of Sport in India*, (Columbia, 2015), 21; O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India', 493.

Belur, supports O’Hanlon’s claim that club swinging and military practices were intertwined. The Temple’s exterior depicts Indian clubs being used in battle:



Fig 1.3: ‘Battle Scene - Chennakesava Temple’, Photograph taken by Brian Powell on 10/07/2014.<sup>19</sup>

The fallen soldier’s club in the bottom left quadrant bears a strong resemblance to the schist shown previously, a striking occurrence given that several centuries separated the objects. While supporting O’Hanlon’s claim that Indian clubs were both training tools and weapons in the martial field, the sculpture also demonstrated the clubs’ high status. That the sculptor displayed a clash between an elephant and Indian clubs was perhaps indication that although not equal, the two objects were considered incredibly powerful.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Indian clubs continued to be used as a martial tool until the late seventeenth-century. Thereafter, they were primarily used for wrestlers’ training regimes.<sup>21</sup>

While Indian clubs’ use as training tools was made explicit with the *Manasollasa*’s publication, the relationship between Indian clubs and wrestling was not established until the thirteenth-century, when the *Malla-Purana* was produced.<sup>22</sup> An allegorical text, the *Malla-Purana* discussed Lord Krishna and Balarama’s prescriptions regarding wrestlers’ bodies and

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Powell is a personal friend of the author, who took this photograph while on holiday in India. The photograph was presented to the author following a discussion between the two in early 2016.

<sup>20</sup> John Kistler, *War elephants* (Nebraska, 2007), 7-11.

<sup>21</sup> Krishnaswamy Rajagopalan, *A Brief History of Physical Education in India. Reflections on Physical Education* (Delhi, 1962), 172; Stewart Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation* (Delhi, 1994), 182-208.

<sup>22</sup> Bhogilal Jayachandbhai Sandesara and Ramanlal Nagarji Mehta, *Mallapurāṇa: a rare Sanskrit text on Indian wrestling especially as practiced by the Jyeṣṭhimallas* (Baroda, 1964), 6.

training methods such as club swinging.<sup>23</sup> In reading the text one is struck by two points, first that club swinging had long been a regulated practice and second that one needed significant strength to wield clubs.<sup>24</sup> Singh argues that although all men could wield clubs, only those with extraordinary strength were capable.<sup>25</sup> Those possessing such strength were relatively privileged within martial and physical culture fields, as club swinging became an effective means of using the body to gain employment and social prestige.<sup>26</sup> The *Malla-Purana* helped fuel the clubs' masculine associations as in the post-*Purana* period, club swinging became linked to wrestlers' celibacy and semen retention. Those wielding Indian clubs effectively were depicted as being in complete control of their desires.<sup>27</sup> This tripartite relationship between Indian clubs, physical capital and self-discipline, which originated in the religious epics, thus intensified.<sup>28</sup>

The sixteenth-century Mughal invasion of India did little to temper club swinging's popularity. Moghul interest in wrestling was itself centuries old, and when Moghul leader Zāhīr-ud-Dīn Muḥammad consolidated his Indian empire, he brought his wrestling interest with him.<sup>29</sup> Moghul subjects in India mirrored his affection and eventually Moghul wrestling's ubiquity impacted upon indigenous Hindu practices.<sup>30</sup> Surveying Indian wrestling's history, Alter concluded that from the sixteenth-century, Hindu wrestling evolved into a crossbreed between Hindu and Moghul techniques whose traditions only differed culturally.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, the clubs grew in political significance during Moghul rule, as princes began retaining wrestlers and club swingers in their palaces to showcase their strength.<sup>32</sup> Such athletes acted as 'muscular metaphors' and toured India, competing against rival princes' retainues.<sup>33</sup> Such explicit 'soft power' demonstrations allowed kingdoms to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1-30.

<sup>24</sup> Such strength was equated with a raw and powerful physical capital (body shape, stature and muscle strength). L. Wacquant, *Body & Soul* (Oxford, 2004), 81-82; Steven P. Wainwright, Clare Williams, and Bryan S. Turner, 'Varieties of habitus and the embodiment of ballet', *Qualitative Research*, 6:4 (2006), 536.

<sup>25</sup> Sarva Daman Singh, *Ancient Indian warfare: with special reference to the Vedic period* (Delhi 1989), 111.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Cambridge, 1984) 215-217.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph S. Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism: Hindu masculinity and muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46:3 (2004), 517.

<sup>28</sup> This was likely inspired by the *Brahmacharya* tradition within Hinduism. Ibid., 507.

<sup>29</sup> Annette Susannah Beveridge, *The Baburnama: memoirs of Babur, prince and emperor* (London, 1922), xiii.

<sup>30</sup> M.N. Pearson, 'Recreation in Mughal India', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 1:3 (1984), 336.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph S. Alter, *The wrestler's body: identity and ideology in North India* (California, 1992), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', 507.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph S. Alter, 'The body of one color: Indian wrestling, the Indian state, and utopian somatics', *Cultural Anthropology*, 8:1 (1993), 60.

prove their superiority without engaging in warfare.<sup>34</sup> European accounts such as Nuniz’s travel diaries from 1536, discuss this practice. Noting the Vijayanagara King’s wrestlers, Nuniz observed that although having “a captain over them...they do not perform any other service in the kingdom.”<sup>35</sup> Unbeknownst to Nuniz, the wrestlers were symbols of the king’s power. Similar to religious and martial fields, Indian clubs in the health field held multiple functions. For some they cultivated self-discipline and increased vital energies while for others, they were tools of political showmanship.

Although the clubs’ multiplicity was not immediately apparent to Peter Mundy when he retired to his cabin in 1630, others were soon alerted to this fact. As Britain’s Indian project intensified during the seventeenth-century, East India Company men become increasingly exposed to the daily exercise regimes displayed in the following mid-century painting.<sup>36</sup>

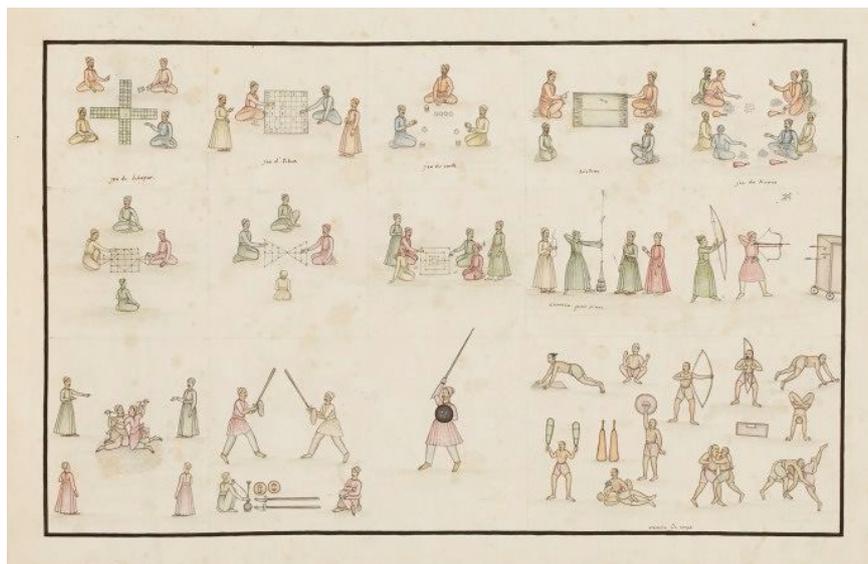


Fig 1.4: ‘The Gentil Album, Second State of Perfection with Different Exercises for the Various Parts of the Day, c. 1770’, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS. 25:23-1980.

The exercisers shown in the bottom right quadrant projected a highly masculine and militaristic image.<sup>37</sup> An imposing image known to British men in India at that time. In 1798 Boyd noted the vast number of muscular bodies one encountered on Indian streets,

<sup>34</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*, (New York, 2004), 1-10. In this instance, Indian prince’s asserted their superiority through the victories of their wrestlers and club swingers.

<sup>35</sup> A. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya, *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History* (Madras, 1946), 165.

<sup>36</sup> C.E.A.W.O., ‘Review’, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4:2 (1930), 414.

<sup>37</sup> Alter, ‘The body of one color’, 60-65.

suggesting that public exhibitions were an important means of showcasing Hindu physical culture's utility and impressiveness.<sup>38</sup> By this time Boyd was able to distinguish between soldiers and acrobats, suggesting that the interest shown by Mundy in such practices was indeed representative of a broader British interest. The influx of Indian troops into army garrisons in the eighteenth-century would see British men fully exposed to the clubs' martial elements. At the century's end Ouseley wrote of Indian troops' practices of whirling dumbbells and heavy pieces of wood overhead "in order to supple their limbs and give grace and strengthen to their bodies."<sup>39</sup> At the dawn of the nineteenth-century there was little doubt amongst British men that Indian clubs were an important part of Indian life, holding deeply held messages that had been forged over centuries.

## II

### **Admiring, Adopting and Adapting: Englishmen and Indian clubs**

What prompted colonisers to undertake club swinging at the beginning of the nineteenth-century and what ramifications did this have for Indian culture? Was this adoption "almost inconceivable" as Alter opined, or was it a manifestation of colonial fears about maintaining health?<sup>40</sup> While concurring with Alter that the British adoption of club swinging should not be treated lightly, the high mortality rates for Company employees and soldiers make the adoption somewhat unsurprising. Stemming from such health concerns Indian clubs were incorporated into, and modified to suit, British medical and army practices at a time when colonial ideas about Hindu men were being re-evaluated. This section will examine the ramifications of the colonial adoption with reference to the clubs themselves and the growing division between English and Hindu men.

Surveying nineteenth-century writings from colonial doctors and administrators presents two interesting starting points. First that life expectancy for colonisers was being curtailed due to unfamiliar diseases and second that British men desperately sought solutions.<sup>41</sup> An 1831

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<sup>38</sup> Hugh Boyd (and others), *The Indian Observer. By the Late Hugh Boyd, Esq. With the Life of the Author, and Some Miscellaneous Poems* (London, 1798), 339.

<sup>39</sup> W. Ouseley, 'Extract of a Journal and Memorandum Written during a Tour in the Nizam's Country in the Month of November 1791,' *Oriental Collections*, 1 (London, 1797-1800), 101-2.

<sup>40</sup> Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', 510.

<sup>41</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounters with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 4.

article published in *Gleanings from Science* illustrated the nature of this problem. From 1790 to 1828 annual deaths of newly appointed East India Company writers varied between 50 and 100 deaths per 200 to 800 appointees.<sup>42</sup> Soon after the study, the *East India Sketchbook* sought humour in the perilous situation through its story, ‘The Sick Certificate’. Although satirical, the protagonist’s cry, “you know in this country how soon one is pulled down,” nevertheless indicated the matter’s seriousness.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, information regarding the Indian climate’s deleterious effects was available in both India and England, which Gilbert argued made “service in India terrifying for many Englishmen.”<sup>44</sup> The situation was similar in the martial field as contemporary reports into troop health attested. In an 1832 report to the House of Commons, a select committee revealed that high troop mortality rates in India continued despite troops’ favourable living conditions.<sup>45</sup> Particularly galling was the Report’s finding that troops were often needlessly exposed to the climate, had few means of exercising and lived a sedentary existence.<sup>46</sup> According to Arnold, the mortality rates for British civil and military colonisers threatened the very sustainability of the British project in India as it raised questions about its feasibility.<sup>47</sup> Indeed Bhattacharya’s recent monograph on the topic, *Unseen Enemy*, seems a particular apt metaphor for the threat levels facing the British in India. As European medicine failed to sustain health, it was perhaps inevitable, and indeed highly advisable, that colonisers turned toward indigenous medical practices.<sup>48</sup>

While diseases struck all subjects, there was awareness amongst British men that their Indian counterparts were faring better, especially those engaged in wrestling or club swinging.<sup>49</sup> As more British workers came to India in the early 1800s, colonial doctors began appropriating Indian medicinal and exercise regimens to treat patients.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps encouraged by colonisers’ openness to Indian culture in other fields, doctors seemed to briefly embrace Hindu forms of

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<sup>42</sup> J.T., ‘On the Duration of Life in the Bengal Civil Service’, *Gleanings from Science*, 3 (1831), 273.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Sick Certificate’, *The East India sketch-book: comprising an account of the present state of society in Calcutta, Bombay, & c in Two Volumes*, Volume One (London, 1832), 220.

<sup>44</sup> David Arnold, *Colonizing the body: State medicine and epidemic disease in nineteenth-century India* (California, 1993), 1-20; Arthur N. Gilbert, ‘Recruitment and reform in the East India Company army, 1760-1800’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 15:1 (1975), 92-93.

<sup>45</sup> Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company, *Military: Appendix to the Report, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1832 Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1833), 313 & 340.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Arnold, *Colonizing the body*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Sudip Bhattacharya, *Unseen Enemy: The English, Disease and Medicine in Colonial Bengal, 1617-1847* (Newcastle, 2014), 1-20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘The drinking habits of our countrymen: European Alcohol Consumption and Colonial Power in British India’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:3 (2012), 383-408.

medicine.<sup>51</sup> For example, although William Jones lamented in 1807 that “I cannot help wishing that ancient Hindu medicine be fully tried”, the fact that he wrote, “fully tried”, suggests it was already occurring to some degree.<sup>52</sup> Following Jones, articles published in *The London Medical and Physical Journal* and *The Asiatic Journal* revealed that English doctors were indeed applying Indian health practices when necessary, including club swinging.<sup>53</sup> Writing in 1827, Scott noted that though he had yet to swing Indian clubs for health purposes, he would do so in the future.<sup>54</sup> Not all doctors exhibited this openness to Indian practices however. While the early nineteenth-century witnessed the foundation of numerous Indian medical schools teaching both English and Indian medicine, the 1830s saw many of them abolished in favour of English medical institutions.<sup>55</sup> For Pande the institutions’ abolition was indication that those pursuing European medicine sought supremacy over indigenous practices.<sup>56</sup>

While the abrogation of Indian medical schools undoubtedly affected medical training, it did not prevent practising doctors from using Indian forms of medicine.<sup>57</sup> Regarding club swinging and European medicinal practices, this relationship became explicit in Brett’s 1840 publication, *A Practical Essay on some of the Principal Surgical Diseases of India*. As a member of Bengal’s medical service, Brett was adamant that for colonisers to remain healthy, they must moderate their eating habits and “practice athletic exercises...and wrestling in imitation of the *Puhlwans* (Hindu Wrestlers).”<sup>58</sup> Strongly in favour of such practices, Brett revealed that

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<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Collingham, *Imperial Bodies* (London, 2001), 3-20.

<sup>52</sup> Lord Teignmouth, *The Works of Sir William Jones: With the Life of the Author. In Thirteen Volumes. Volume Four* (London, 1807), 369-370.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Sievwright, ‘On the Medical and Surgical Science of the Hindus’, *The London Medical and Physical Journal*, 50 (London, 1823), 451-450; ‘New Hindu College at Calcutta’, *The Asiatic Journal*, 14 (London, 1822), 551- 556.

<sup>54</sup> David Scott was agent to the Governor General of Bengal at this time. A. White, *Memoir of the Late David Scott, Esq. Agent to the Governor General, on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, and Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in Assam* (Calcutta, 1832), 90.

<sup>55</sup> Gerrit Jan Meulenbeld and Dominik Wujastyk, *Studies on Indian Medical History* (Delhi, 2001), 119.

<sup>56</sup> Ishita Pande, *Medicine, race and liberalism in British Bengal: symptoms of empire* (London, 2009), 67.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 68-70.

<sup>58</sup> F. H. Brett, *A Practical Essay on some of the Principal Surgical Diseases of India* (Calcutta, 1840), 39. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 20-25, discusses the consumption patterns of the more epicurean Company employees during this period.

The writer [Brett] has long admired and practiced the callisthenic exercising of the Asiatics, and attributes a better state of health and stamina, and a capability for active pursuits...to a systematic use of these exercises.<sup>59</sup>

Brett's praises showcased the reverence held by English doctors for Indian exercises. Furthermore the medical community's positive response to Brett's work illustrated that club swinging was held in high regard despite increasing suspicions of Indian medicine more generally.<sup>60</sup> Other contemporary texts discussing English doctors' use of 'Asiatic' exercises reveal that Brett was not alone.<sup>61</sup> How such doctors rationalised their decisions is difficult to establish, but Brett's work is telling. Conceding that Indian practices, such as club swinging, were beneficial, Brett stressed that Hindu medicine was overall, still markedly inferior to European medicine.<sup>62</sup> Club swinging was an exception to the rule, and European medicine still reigned supreme. Nevertheless it was clear from Brett and others, that club swingers' physical capital as represented in their robust health, encouraged doctors to prescribe club swinging when necessary.<sup>63</sup>

The martial field in India echoed this receptiveness to Hindu exercises. In 1809, English soldier, Thomas Broughton wrote admiringly of Indian troops' physical culture practices, concluding that not only were such exercises beneficial, those undertaking them were extraordinary athletic.<sup>64</sup> The following sketch by Broughton illustrates such practices:

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<sup>59</sup> Brett, *A Practical Essay on some of the Principal Surgical Diseases of India*, 39-40.

<sup>60</sup> James Forbe, *British and Foreign Medical Review; or, Quarterly Journal of Practical Medicine and Surgery*, XI: July – October (London, 1841), 424; James Johnson, *The Medico-Chirurgical Review, and Journal of Practical Medicine*, 35: April to September (London, 1841), 384.

<sup>61</sup> *The Anglo-Hindoostanee Hand-book; or Stranger's Self-Interpreter and Guide to Colloquial and General Intercourse with the Natives of India. With a map of India, and Five Illustrations* (London, 1850), 228-229.

<sup>62</sup> Brett, *A Practical Essay on some of the Principal Surgical Diseases of India*, 201.

<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Laura R. Graham, and H. Glenn Penny, *Performing Indigeneity: Global Histories and Contemporary Experiences* (Nebraska, 2014), 285, noted the tendency for colonized males to mimic the masculine habitus of their rulers. Indian clubs would seem to be an inversion to this.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp During the Year 1809: Descriptive of the Character, Manners, Domestic Habits, and Religious Ceremonies, of the Mahrattas* (London, 1813), 218-225.



Fig 1.5: ‘Daily Exercise, Mahratta Camp’, Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp During the Year 1809* (London, 1813), 218.

The British world, as represented by the flags, uniforms and tents, appears somewhat sterile. A lifeless world contrasted with that of the Indian exercisers whose exposed physiques moved elegantly about the pit, engaged in rigorous activity. While Broughton made no mention of Englishmen engaging in such exercises, Elphinstone’s 1815 work did just that. Surveying troops in Persia, Elphinstone praised one Englishman for performing 600 *dands* (push-ups) followed by club swinging. Remarking that Englishmen stationed in Persia and India regularly engaged in such exercises, Elphinstone opined that Englishmen’s strength paled in comparison to Hindus.<sup>65</sup> Concluding Elphinstone stated,

The degree to which these exercises bring out the muscles and increase the strength is not to be believed...They are one of the best inventions which Europe could borrow from the East.<sup>66</sup>

Beginning in the 1820s, army officials began ‘borrowing from the East’ in the way Elphinstone envisioned. In 1824, Henry Torrens, Adjutant-General to the Forces, recommended wooden clubs “in order to supple the recruit, open his chest and give freedom to the muscles.”<sup>67</sup> Following the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) Torrens sought to improve

<sup>65</sup> Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India* (London, 1815), 263-264.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Henry Whitelock Torrens, *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army* (London, 1824), 3-4.

recruits' fitness, with Indian clubs a primary method.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently in 1825, Army and Navy Superintendent of Gymnastic Exercise, P.H. Clias, advocated club swinging for English troops and the public.<sup>69</sup> By the 1830s, club swinging was commonplace within the martial field as evidenced by Walker's 1834 work *British Manly Exercises*, which referred to club exercises "adopted by the army."<sup>70</sup> Whether Walker knew it or not, his own intention to use clubs to increase Englishmen's strength harked back to the clubs' original use as a tool for increasing one's vital energy.<sup>71</sup>

Alter previously considered the British adoption of Indian clubs as "almost inconceivable."<sup>72</sup> It would now seem that this adoption was less surprising given the coloniser's openness to Indian culture and also the severity of health issues in India. Nevertheless, officials and doctors oftentimes attempted to justify this adoption and did so by stripping the clubs' original meanings. This process of 'emptying sports', identified by MacAloon, results in exercises being stripped of their traditional capital and replaced with new meanings.<sup>73</sup> Within the medical field, doctors endorsed club swinging, but only within a European framework of understanding. Clubs were not employed to increase one's vital energy, but to treat European problems. That the clubs had religious connotations was superfluous. Instead they became functional forms of corrective exercise, capable of ensuring "perfect capillary circulation...healthy action of the liver and of all the secretions."<sup>74</sup> In removing the clubs' original social and cultural capital, British medics exclusively focused on club swinging's benefits for the maintenance of colonial health, thereby imbuing the clubs with a new English meaning.

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<sup>68</sup> Hew Strachan, *From Waterloo to Balaclava: tactics, technology, and the British Army, 1815-1854* (Cambridge, 1985), 16. The 1833 revision of *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army* published by the War Office (London, 1833) made no mention of the wooden club discussed by Torrens despite the fact that it had become commonplace in the British army.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Heinrich Clias, *An Elementary Course of Gymnastic Exercises: Intended to Develop and Improve the Physical Powers of Man, Etc.* (London, 1825, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition), 16. The first three editions of Clias' work, published from 1823 to 1825, made no reference to Indian clubs.

<sup>70</sup> Donald Walker, *British manly exercises: in which rowing and sailing are now first described, and riding and driving are for the first time given in a work of this kind...* (London, 1834), 22.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-20. Chapter two will discuss Walker's books in detail.

<sup>72</sup> Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', 510.

<sup>73</sup> John J. MacAloon, 'The Theory of Spectacle: Reviewing Olympic Ethnography', in Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (eds.), *National identity and global sports events: Culture, politics, and spectacle in the Olympics and the football World Cup* (London, 2006), 15-40; Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', 510.

<sup>74</sup> Brett, *A Practical Essay on some of the Principal Surgical Diseases of India*, 201.

This ‘emptying’ was equally transparent in the martial field where the first reference to Indian clubs by Torrens in 1824 made no mention of their origins.<sup>75</sup> Vishnu’s *gada* was relegated to a common piece of equipment, a ‘wooden club’ of no descript. Although Clias and Walker, writing after Torrens, labelled them as Indian clubs, they too made no reference to their origins.<sup>76</sup> In abandoning the clubs’ original meanings, it was possible to re-invent and adapt them for English purposes. In the martial field, Indian clubs were remodelled into lightweight clubs bearing little resemblance to their traditional counterparts. Whereas traditional clubs weighed up to seventy-pounds, those recommended, and adopted by Britain’s army, weighed four.<sup>77</sup> English exercises were also differentiated.<sup>78</sup> In Hindu practices, clubs were swung in long arches, while English practices focused on swinging clubs circularly in various directions.<sup>79</sup> Two different club swinging habitus emerged, one associated with Hindu practices and the other with English practices.

The British adoption of Indian clubs also presented a challenge to masculine identities within the colonial field. Beginning with Orme in the 1760s, numerous writers had partly justified English occupation in India owing to the effeminacy of Indian and, in particular Hindu, men.<sup>80</sup> Appropriating Hindu exercises seemed contrary to claims that Hindu men were inherently weak. If Hindu athletes were oftentimes stronger than Englishmen, how could Hindus be viewed negatively? A modification of this belief was warranted and towards the 1850s, an increasing number of references to the effeminacy of Bengali middle-class men, as opposed to all Indian men, emerged.<sup>81</sup> Whereas Maurice wrote of all Indians “degenerate effeminacy” in 1800, later writers such as Campbell in 1853 only attacked Bengali men.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Torrens, *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army*, 3-4.

<sup>76</sup> Clias, *An Elementary Course of Gymnastic Exercises* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) and Walker, *British manly exercises* (1<sup>st</sup> edition).

<sup>77</sup> Alter’s ‘Indian clubs and colonialism’, 515-520.

<sup>78</sup> Walker, *British manly exercises*, 22-30, provides a series of detailed explanations and diagrams on these movements. Callisthenic movements, as appropriated from Swedish gymnastics, greatly influenced English programmes of exercise in the nineteenth and twentieth-century. In 1939, G.V. Sibley, Director of Physical Education at Loughborough College stated that, “physical education in England has been built up in the main, on Swedish gymnastics, except that they have been greatly modified to suit English conditions.” Fred Leonard and George Affleck, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education* (Philadelphia, 1949, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 421.

<sup>79</sup> Alter, *The wrestler's body*, 109 provides an excellent description of club swinging both past and present. For a visual demonstration of indigenous club swinging see Vincent Giordano’s documentary *The Physical Body: Indian Wrestling And Physical Culture* (California, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> John Rosselli, ‘The self-image of effiteness: Physical education and nationalism in nineteenth-century Bengal’, *Past and Present* (1980), 121-148.

<sup>81</sup> This change in belief systems was the result of several shifts in the colonial field over a period of time and represented attempts to maintain the stability of the colonial project. *Ibid.*, 121-148.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Maurice, *Indian antiquities or Dissertations relative to the ancient geographical divisions, the pure system of primeval theology, the grand code of civil laws, the original form of government and the various and*

Campbell suggested “it is from Bengalees...with whom we first came in contact that the early popular ideas of the mildness and effeminacy of the Hindoos are derived.”<sup>83</sup> This attack upon a subset of Indian men, as opposed to all Hindus, allowed Englishmen retain their elite position in a gendered hierarchy as it permitted them to accept strong Hindus while still feel physically superior. Regarding the Hindu wrestlers from whom club swinging had been appropriated, a specified and confused explanatory pattern emerged. Conceding that such men were powerful, English writers cited their inferiority compared to Muslim athletes.<sup>84</sup> Hindu strength could thus be lauded once it was acknowledged they were inferior to their Muslim counterparts and by proxy, Englishmen.

Owing primarily to the overwhelming mortality rates of British men in India, the colonial adoption of club swinging primarily represented colonisers’ concerns about their health and wellbeing. In the course of this adoption the clubs’ traditional meanings, forged over centuries in the religious, military and fitness fields, were removed and replaced with English ideas about health, fitness and medicine. The club was remodelled to accommodate mass training regimes and new English exercises created. The divergence between English and Indian forms of exercising was marked, as English clubs were shorter and lighter than traditional Hindu clubs and English exercises were significantly different to those engaged in by indigenous practitioners. This English appropriation coincided with a re-evaluation of colonial ideas regarding the effeminacy of Hindu men. Challenges to this idea, such as the English admiration for traditional club swingers, contributed to a narrowing of this perception so that henceforth, Bengali middle-class men were depicted particularly unfavourably. Surveying the British adoption of club swinging demonstrates not only the openness of colonisers to Indian culture but also how colonisers sought to distance themselves from this culture by reinterpreting cultural artefacts to suit their own tastes.

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*profound literature of Hindostan compared throughout with the religion, laws, government and literature of Persia, Egypt and Greece* (London, 1800), 433; George Campbell, *Modern India: a sketch of the system of civil government, with some account of the natives and native institutions* (London, 1853), 457.

<sup>83</sup> George Campbell, *Modern India*, 59.

<sup>84</sup> For Muslim-Hindu wrestler comparisons see *Allen’s Indian Mail, and the Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India, China and all the parts of the East*: Volume IX. January to December (London, 1851), 192; ‘The Emperor Baber and His Contemporaries’, *The Bombay Quarterly Review*, 1 (Bombay, 1855), 84-134.

### III

#### **Mutiny, Military and Muscles: Indian club swinging from 1857 to 1914**

Indian club swinging in the latter half of the nineteenth-century was greatly affected by larger trends within India. Thus in examining club swinging from the late 1850s, societal changes following the 1857 Indian Rebellion must first be discussed. The result of numerous employment grievances, the rebellion of Indian troops against East India Company operations in 1857 escalated into one of the greatest military threats to nineteenth-century British rule. The conflict witnessed unprecedented levels of violence and initial Indian successes caused the Company great concern.<sup>85</sup> Compounding the Company's miseries, sympathy amongst Britain's populace was initially lacking.<sup>86</sup> Three months into the conflict the *Delhi Gazette Extra* claimed,

The British public remain utterly impassive and indifferent...they have made up their mind that it was entirely owing to the insolence and incompetency of the Regimental Officers, and seem rather glad that they have suffered.<sup>87</sup>

The colonial field was troubled and this remained the case until a string of British victories later in the year. By then English public opinion was effectively united against the Indian cause after it was revealed that British citizens had been slaughtered by Indian troops.<sup>88</sup> Following massacres at Bibighar in 1857, press reports alleging incidences of sexual assaults by Indian troops helped racial prejudices reach a fever pitch, resulting in thousands of Indian deaths and numerous cities' destruction.<sup>89</sup> When a formal peace was declared on 8 July 1858 the colonial field had changed irrevocably from that of two years previous.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (Oxford, 2008, 8<sup>th</sup> edition), 230-240.

<sup>86</sup> 'The Bengal Mutiny', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 82: September (1857), 382.

<sup>87</sup> Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the military, race and masculinity in British imperial culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester, 2004), 38.

<sup>88</sup> Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (London, 2003), 340-348.

<sup>89</sup> Alison Blunt, 'Embodying war: British women and domestic defilement in the Indian Mutiny 1857-8', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26:3 (2000), 403-428; Piers Brendon, *The decline and fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2008), 149; David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857*, 344-350.

<sup>90</sup> Ferdinand Mount, *The Tears of the Rajas: Mutiny, Money and Marriage in India 1805-1905* (London, 2015), 589-595.

Given that many blamed the East India Company for the Rebellion, it was unsurprising that the Company was wound down following the conflict's cessation. On 2 August 1858 the Government of India Act ceased Company operations and officially annexed India as a British colonial entity.<sup>91</sup> The Act signalled a change in England's Indian policy with less emphasis placed on military might and more on benevolent governance.<sup>92</sup> Included in this was an aspirational strengthening of bonds with Indian princes who had remained loyal during the conflict.<sup>93</sup> As civil governance resumed, Indians entered the Indian Civil Service, new laws were enacted and efforts were made to maintain peace, including much stricter policing of Indian public demonstrations.<sup>94</sup> Additionally India's army was restructured with those soldiers hastily recruited during the Rebellion retained, despite reservations.<sup>95</sup> As enlistments resumed, troops were recruited with an eye to harmonious conditions. For the 1858 Peel Commission, a contributing factor to the rebellion had been the Bengal army's homogenous nature. The Commission recommended that in order to avoid future outbreaks, a variety of ethnicities was needed amongst the troops.<sup>96</sup> For Choudhury, the division of Indians into separable groupings laid the foundation for martial theory as it encouraged categorizations of Indians based on their military prowess.<sup>97</sup> These categories often depicted northern Indians as inherently martial and Bengali men as effeminate.<sup>98</sup> This perhaps explains the influx of 'martial races' into the Bengal army following the rebellion. Despite many recruits' martial reputation, generals often found them physically unfit and undisciplined.<sup>99</sup> Indian clubs would soon be used to correct such 'deficiencies'.

Coupled with governance and military reform, scholars have noted a marked change in British attitudes towards Indian culture post-1857. In a bid to re-establish colonial

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<sup>91</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 239-240.

<sup>92</sup> Steven Patterson, 'Postcards from the Raj,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40:2 (2006), 144.

<sup>93</sup> J. A Mangan, 'Eton in India: The imperial diffusion of a Victorian educational ethic,' *History of Education*, 7:2 (1978), 105.

<sup>94</sup> Majumdar, *Cricket in Colonial India 1780-1947*, 81.

<sup>95</sup> Gavin Rand, 'Reconstructing the Imperial Military after the Rebellion', in Gavin Rand and Crispin Bates (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857: Military Aspects of the Indian Uprising Volume IV* (London, 2013), 93-112.

<sup>96</sup> 'The Indian Army Report', *The Spectator*, 21 May (1859), 538-540; Seema Alvi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770-1830* (Delhi, 1995), 39-49.

<sup>97</sup> Martial theory refers to the theory that subsections of the Indian race could be divided into martial and non-martial peoples. Indira Choudhury, *Frail hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi, 2001), 4-5; Mrinalini Sinha, 'Giving masculinity a history: some contributions from the historiography of colonial India,' *Gender & History*, 11:3 (1999), 445-460.

<sup>98</sup> Choudhury, *Frail hero and Virile History*, 4-5.

<sup>99</sup> *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire Into the Sanitary State of the Army in India; with Pieces of Evidence* (London, 1863), 300-333.

supremacy, the upkeep of ‘proper’ British mannerisms became increasingly important for some colonisers.<sup>100</sup> While cultural intermingling had previously gone on to a great extent, Indian clubs being one example, cultural boundaries were amplified post-rebellion.<sup>101</sup> Following 1857, Indian culture was presented as somehow dangerous, a point exemplified by an 1866 *Cornhill Magazine* article which stated there was “something in the Indian sun that breeds maggots.”<sup>102</sup> Seen as symptomatic of that ‘something’ was the condition of Bengali men, who although generally absent from fighting in 1857, bore the brunt of colonial disdain.<sup>103</sup> The post-rebellion period saw numerous Indian histories and social commentaries produced attacking sections of the Bengali male populace as timid or weak.<sup>104</sup> Derided by the coloniser, scholars argue that some Bengali men began assuming that their supposed effeminacy was true.<sup>105</sup> Although some accepted this claim, many challenged it through the use of indigenous exercise regimes, such as club swinging. The Bengal interest in club swinging coincided with the Indian army’s use of Indian clubs to discipline ‘unruly’ Indian soldiers, thereby illustrating how Indian clubs both reinforced and challenged gender identities in India at this time.

Interestingly, the army’s increased usage of Indian clubs from the 1860s was a result of the Crimean War (1853-1856) as opposed to the Indian rebellion. Following Crimea and revelations of poor troop health, debates arose in England about troop fitness. Emerging from these debates was the Royal Army Physical Training Corps (RAPTC), established in 1860.<sup>106</sup> As the army’s first dedicated fitness group, the RAPTC sought to improve recruits’ fitness before they progressed to combat training. Alongside the RAPTC’s establishment, garrisons

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<sup>100</sup> S. Vimala, ‘The Politically Correct Memsahib: Performing Englishness in Select Anglo-Indian Advice Manuals’, *Special Issue on Performance Studies: Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5:2 (2013), 284-290.

<sup>101</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 65-80; Paul Dimeo, ‘Sporting and the ‘Civilizing Mission’ in India’, in the Later Eighteenth Century’, in Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (eds.), *Colonialism as civilizing mission: cultural ideology in British India* (London, 2004), 165-178.

<sup>102</sup> ‘The Peace-Conflicts of India’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 14: 82 (October, 1866), 423.

<sup>103</sup> Dimeo, ‘A Parcel of Dummies?’, 43.

<sup>104</sup> George Otto Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (London, 1865), 308; Edward Henry Nolan, *The illustrated history of the British Empire in India and the East, from the earliest times to the suppression of the Sepoy mutiny in 1859 Vol: 1* (London, 1859), 500; Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India and a Concise History of the Places, Portraits, and Maps. Volume 4* (London, 1858), 612.

<sup>105</sup> Rosselli, ‘The self-image of effeminess’, 127; Sikata Banerjee, ‘Armed masculinity, Hindu nationalism and female political participation in India: Heroic mothers, chaste wives and celibate warriors’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8:1 (2006), 66-67; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1995), 1-20.

<sup>106</sup> E.A.L. Oldfield, *History of the Army Physical Training Corps* (Aldershot, 1955), 1; James D. Campbell, ‘*The Army Isn’t All Work’: Physical Culture in the Evolution of the British Army, 1860-1920* (Burlington, 2012), 6-10.

across the British Empire were ordered to build gymnasiums and exercise using Archibald Maclaren's training system.<sup>107</sup> Maclaren's 1862 army training manual advocated training with Indian clubs alongside dumbbells and barbells.<sup>108</sup> A positive endorsement echoed by Lieutenant Anderson's *Series of Exercises for the Regulation Clubs* (1863). Anderson's 'regulation clubs', pictured below, were in reality, Indian clubs;

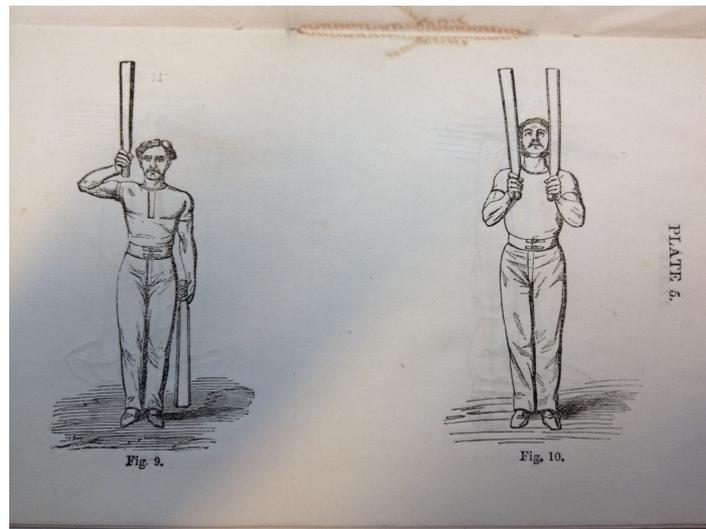


Fig 1.6: 'Exercise 9 and 10 – Regulation Clubs', Lieutenant Anderson, *A Series of Exercises for the Regulation Clubs* (London, 1863), 11.

The use of the relatively sterile word 'regulation' indicated the clubs' new use for disciplining troops. Accompanying Anderson's work were orders that each garrison use 'regulation clubs'.<sup>109</sup> Orders which came at a timely moment in India. In 1863 published reports into India's army sanitary conditions highlighted troops' sedentary existences.<sup>110</sup> The findings revealed that several garrisons contained no gymnasia and those that did were often unsuitable.<sup>111</sup> An English soldiers' diary illuminated the extent of this physical inactivity:

Bed till daybreak;

Drill; one hour;

Breakfast; served by native servants

Bed;

<sup>107</sup> Oldfield, *History of the Army Physical Training Corps*, 5.

<sup>108</sup> Archibald Maclaren, *A Military System of Gymnastic Exercises for the use of Instructors* (London, 1862), 6.

<sup>109</sup> Lieutenant Anderson, *A Series of Exercises for the Regulation Clubs* (London, 1863), A2.

<sup>110</sup> *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire Into the Sanitary State of the Army in India; with Pieces of Evidence* (London, 1863), 342.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-344.

Dinner; served by native servants

Bed;

Tea; served by native servants

Drink;

Bed, *da capo*.<sup>112</sup>

Conditions were similar for Indian troops who although fond of exercises such as club swinging, often struggled to practice them due to equipment shortages or officers' resistance.<sup>113</sup> Following the report's publication however, troop exercise was prioritized.

Mangan has previously suggested that physical exercise within the British Empire reinforced racist, sexist and imperial attitudes.<sup>114</sup> This argument seems particularly applicable in the case of martial club swinging, which from the 1870s onwards, often saw Indian clubs used to differentiate and discipline 'unruly' Indian troops. Indian troops were trained primarily with 'regulation clubs' weighing four-pounds, as opposed to Hindu clubs, which could weigh upwards of seventy-pounds.<sup>115</sup> Additionally English clubs were short in stature, roughly the distance between a user's hand and elbow, while Hindu clubs could measure past a user's waist. The clubs' physical differences necessitated modified exercises. Stemming from this, army officials focused primarily on circular motions, either overhead or to the side. A club swinging habitus contrasted with the Hindu practice, which swung clubs rhythmically around the body.<sup>116</sup> The modified English practice represented a subtle assertion of British supremacy over Indian practices, and by extension, Indian bodies.<sup>117</sup> The English practice produced a markedly different physique to that of Hindu exercisers. Indian practices, which emphasised heavier clubs, produced greater muscular size than English exercises, which focused on flexibility and 'opening the chest'.<sup>118</sup> Indian soldiers' bodies thus differentiated them from fellow Indians and told of their relationship with the coloniser.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 357

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>114</sup> J.A. Mangan, 'Britain's Chief Spiritual Export: Imperial Sport as Moral Metaphor, Political Symbol and Cultural Bond', in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire and Society* (London, 1992), 1-11.

<sup>115</sup> See Office of the Surgeon General, Indian Medical Service, *Medical and sanitary report of the native army of Bengal for the year 1876* (Calcutta, 1877), 199; Surgeon General, *Medical and sanitary report of the native army of Madras for the year 1877* (Madras, 1878), 80; T.E. P. Martin, *Sketch of the medical history of the native army of Bombay, for the year 1870* (Bombay, 1871), 60.

<sup>116</sup> Alter, *The wrestler's body*, 109.

<sup>117</sup> For Bourdieu, this could be interpreted as an act of symbolic violence. Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine domination* (Stanford, 2001), 1-2 and 36-40.

<sup>118</sup> Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', 504-511.

While acknowledging the improved bodies produced by club swinging, army officials primarily saw the clubs as a means of instilling discipline in ‘unruly’ Indians.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, wherever Indian troops were stationed, their clubs were brought with them to maintain order.<sup>120</sup> This stemmed in part from a generalized army ideology whereby Indian soldiers were stereotypically assumed to lack Englishmen’s discipline and strength.<sup>121</sup> That club swinging instilled discipline was a point of considerable pride for English officers, as evidenced during the Royal Tour of India in 1905, which saw garrison inspections regularly exhibit mass club demonstrations by Indian troops;



Fig 1.7: ‘Indian club Swinging at Military Sports’, The Royal Visit to Gwalior 1905, British Library, London.

Under Bourdieusian logic, putting bodies on display presupposes an awareness of the image being projected.<sup>122</sup> Exhibitions using ‘regulation clubs’ arguably demonstrated army officials’ contented awareness that their control over Indian troops was strong. Club swinging in the martial field therefore reinforced British men’s hierarchical position over Indian men, a relationship of disciplined colonisers and ‘unruly’ Indians. British men were responsible for training Indian soldiers with the clubs and when troops failed to mimic a desired club swinging habitus, they were castigated and isolated from their cohorts.<sup>123</sup> Such Spartan methods were utilised by army officers based on the assumption that they had a natural

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<sup>119</sup> Reflecting on the work of the past five years, the Inspector General of Gymnasia remarked upon the efficacy of physical exercise in removing ‘slackers’ from native troops. Collection 416 Annual Reports of the Inspector General of Gymnasia IOR/L/MIL/7/17086 (Sub-series): 1902-1917. Paper No. 0043, *British Library*.

<sup>120</sup> ‘The Indian Troops at Malta’, *Illustrated London News*, 13 July (1878), 27.

<sup>121</sup> Campbell, ‘*The Army Isn’t All Work*’, 103.

<sup>122</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The peasant and his body’, *Ethnography* 5:4 (2004), 585.

<sup>123</sup> Collection 416 Annual Reports of the Inspector General of Gymnasia IOR/L/MIL/7/17086 (Sub-series): 1902-1917. Paper No. 0067, *British Library*.

crossover for battle. From the 1890s however, it became apparent that the club's utility was questionable. In 1896 the Inspector General of Gymnasia was privately criticizing the clubs' efficacy regarding battlefield application to officials within the army.<sup>124</sup> Many echoed the Inspector's sentiments and by 1900 new training methods were in preparation.<sup>125</sup> In 1906, the army adopted a system of bodyweight exercises inspired by Swedish ('Ling') gymnastics, thereby diminishing the clubs' utility.<sup>126</sup> Once referred to as "the wonderful club exercise", by 1914 the clubs' only use was as a prop in troop relay races.<sup>127</sup> Despite their ignominious end, there is little doubt that Indian clubs played a significant role in nineteenth-century military training as they were used to reform, discipline and dominate Indian bodies.

Concurrently as the army used Indian clubs to reinforce negative images of Indian men, the Hindu physical culture movement attempted to use the clubs as political tools to challenge claims of effeminacy. Beginning in the 1860s and extending into the twentieth-century, the movement was part of a larger socio-political drive to challenge colonial beliefs about Hindu men alongside establishing a dominant societal position over Muslim men and Hindu women.<sup>128</sup> Spearheaded by Bengal middle-class men, the movement focused on building strong bodies to gain greater economic and social prestige.<sup>129</sup> Beginning with Bengali intellectual Rajnarayan Basu's 1866 call for a physical revival, increased emphasis was placed on strong bodies as a means of rediscovering Hindu masculinity.<sup>130</sup> In 1867, the Nationality Promotion Society was established and the Tagore family launched the *Hindu Mela*, an annual cultural and sporting event.<sup>131</sup> Importantly, public gatherings such as the *Mela* were not subject to the same scrutiny as political demonstrations, making them a relatively protected space for exchanging ideas.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Collection 416 Annual Reports of the Inspector General of Gymnasia IOR/L/MIL/7/17086 (Sub-series): 1902-1917. Paper No. 0035, *British Library*.

<sup>125</sup> Oldfield, *History of the Army Physical Training Corps*, 17-18.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Simon D. Kehoe, *The Indian club exercise: with explanatory figures and positions: photographed from life: also, general remarks on physical culture: illustrated with portraitures of celebrated athletes, exhibiting great muscular development from the club exercise...* (New York, 1866), IX; General Staff, *Physical Training* (London, 1918), 48.

<sup>128</sup> Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 1-20; Rosselli, 'The self-image of effeminess', 121-148. Sen, *Nation at Play*, 90-100; Sikata Banerjee and Basu Subho, 'The quest for manhood: Masculine Hinduism and nation in Bengal', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 26:3 (2006), 476-490.

<sup>129</sup> Namrata R. Ganneri, 'The Debate on 'Revival' and the Physical Culture Movement in Western India (1900-1950)', in Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz and Joseph Maguire (eds.), *Sport Across Asia: Politics, Cultures, and Identities* (London, 2013), 131.

<sup>130</sup> Sen, *Nation at Play*, 95.

<sup>131</sup> Swarupa Gupta, *Notions of Nationhood in Bengal: Perspectives on Samaj, c. 1867-1905* (Leiden, 2009), 52.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

It was at the *Melas* that Hindu wrestlers were invited to showcase their physical prowess.<sup>133</sup> Such demonstrations included traditional club swinging and represented an effort to increase lay interest in health.<sup>134</sup> Within a decade of the inaugural *Mela*, numerous *akharas* (Hindu gymnasia) were established throughout Bengal and elsewhere, which perhaps indicates the success of such efforts.<sup>135</sup> Dedicated to the cause, *akharas*'s patrons encouraged Hindu wrestling in the hope that wrestling would re-establish the 'manliness' of Hindu men.<sup>136</sup> Thus from the 1870s, wrestling and its associated practices became a means of challenging colonial claims that Hindus were effeminate and lesser than other races. This was evidenced by the fact that Muslims were regularly invited to *Melas* to compete against Hindu wrestlers, as wrestlers became 'muscular metaphors' once more.<sup>137</sup> At the 1878 *Mela*, Bengali newspaper *Sambad Prabhakar* commented, "last year, the Bengali had defeated the Punjabi, this year he lost... that the Bengali has succeeded in wrestling with a Punjabi—this in itself is worthy of praise."<sup>138</sup> A Hindu wrestler's physical capital was paramount to his success in these contests, as each bout threatened his social prestige and reputation.<sup>139</sup> That Hindu wrestlers spent hours swinging Indian clubs illustrates the club's importance for this project.<sup>140</sup> As demonstrated in the *Harper's Weekly* (1877) sketching pictured below, fights between Hindu and Muslim wrestlers were hotly contested affairs, attracting both Indian and English spectators, thereby providing platforms to display a 'rediscovered' Hindu masculinity.

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<sup>133</sup> Amitava Chatterjee, 'From courtyard sport to competitive sport: evolution of wrestling in colonial Bengal', *Sport in Society*, 18:1 (2015), 4.

<sup>134</sup> Sen, *Nation at Play*, 161 discusses how Indian club swinging became swept up in an anti-colonial, pro-Hindu wave.

<sup>135</sup> Gupta, 'Cultures of the Body in Colonial Bengal', 1688.

<sup>136</sup> Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 1-20; Rosselli, 'The self-image of effeminate', 121-148.

<sup>137</sup> Sen, *Nation at Play*, 94-96.

<sup>138</sup> Choudhury, *Frail hero and Virile History*, 22.

<sup>139</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'The social logic of sparring', in Patricia Vertinsky, and Jennifer Hargreaves (eds.), *Physical Culture, Power, and the Body* (New York, 2006), 147.

<sup>140</sup> Alter, *The wrestler's body*, 50-56 provides an in-depth discussion of such training methods. See also 'Indian Soldiers at Play', *Harper's Weekly Supplement*, 16 November, (1878), 921, which discussed the prominence of club swinging among soldiers and Hindu wrestlers.

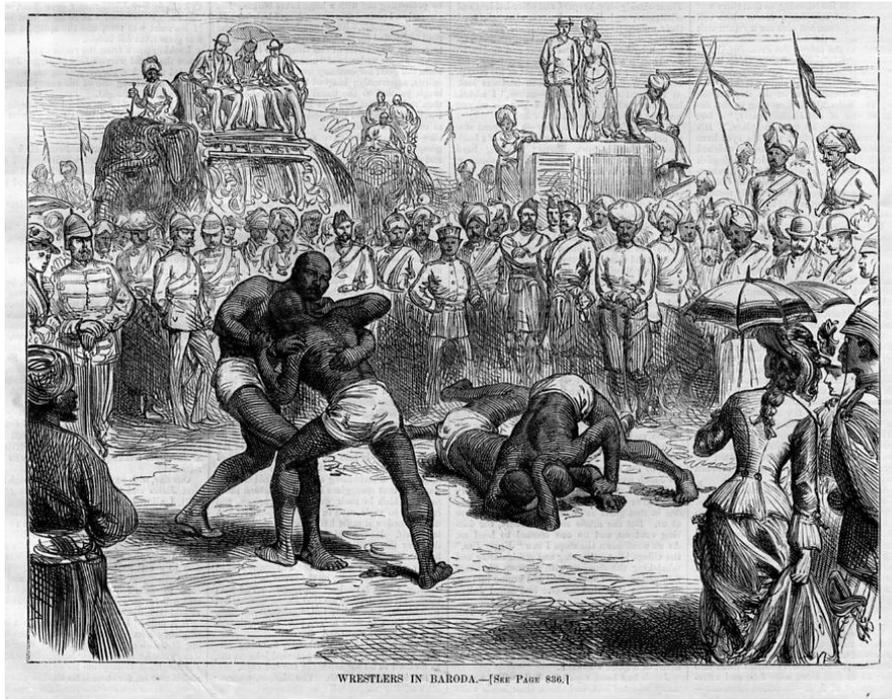


Fig 1.8: ‘Wrestler’s in Baroda’, *Harper’s Weekly*, October (1877), 835-836.

Although the *Mela* declined in the 1880s, Hindu physical culture flourished as it began feeding into larger political and religious movements. From the mid-1880s, both hard-line and moderate Hindu political activists supported greater engagement with physical culture.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, religious figures such as Swamis Abhedānanda and Vivekananda, linked physical capital to salvation.<sup>142</sup> For Vivekananda, physical capital fed into ‘spiritual capital’ as evidenced by his advice that “you will understand the *Gita* [Bhagavad Gita] better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger.”<sup>143</sup> While Vivekananda recommended both English and Hindu exercises, his comments sent scores of Hindu men into *akharas*.<sup>144</sup> By 1890, Hindu physical culture was thriving and its revival was mirroring the religious, martial and militaristic undertones of pre-colonial times.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Indian Nationalism and the ‘world forces’: transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War’, *Journal of Global History*, 2:3 (2007), 325-344; M.N. Das, *Indian National Congress Versus the British* (Ajanta, 1978), 214-215.

<sup>142</sup> Swami Abhedānanda, *Abhedānanda in India* (Calcutta, 1968), 214-215; Goutam Basu, ‘Self Assertion through Physical Culture Movement in Bengal during the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early twentieth century’, *Proceeding of the International Conference on Social Science Research* (2013), 63. Both were disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who although interested in cultivating a healthy body, did not share his disciples’ passion for physical culture. Mark Singleton, *Yoga body: The origins of modern posture practice* (Oxford, 2010), 101.

<sup>143</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (London, 1933, originally published 1897), 50-51.

<sup>144</sup> Horst Krüger, *Indian Nationalists and the World Proletariat: The National Liberation Struggle in India and the International Labour Movement Before 1914* (New Delhi, 2002), 216.

<sup>145</sup> See section one of this Chapter.

Matters intensified in the 1890s when English sporting contests began featuring English and Indian athletes.<sup>146</sup> In 1892 Tom Cannon, a European Greco-Roman Champion touring India, competed against Karim Bux, an unknown Hindu wrestler.<sup>147</sup> It was the first time that European and Indian wrestling styles met and the bout attracted thousands of spectators.<sup>148</sup> In a tight contest, Bux pinned Cannon, signalling a rare defeat for the English wrestler, who somewhat ungraciously, blamed the loss on poor refereeing decisions. Their English representative defeated, newspapers rallied around Captain Ross who promised to fight Bux and “restore the European cause.”<sup>149</sup> While a Bux-Ross fight never materialised, Hindu physical culturists had struck a blow to colonial effeminacy claims. Newspaper reports announcing that a ‘Hindoo conquered’ an Englishman ensured as much.<sup>150</sup> That Bux built his physique through club swinging and wrestling substantiated beliefs that club swinging could build a physical capital capable of restoring a ‘lost’ Hindu manhood. Bux’s strong physique had impressed English spectators and perhaps influenced the organisers of the 1896 India and Ceylon Exhibition to include a traditional club swinger in their London event. The Exhibition’s athlete, shown below, possessed a body that was in stark contrast to the sinewy Indian soldiers pictured earlier. Furthermore, his acknowledgement of the camera is indication that not only was he proud of his body, he was aware of the need to exhibit it.

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<sup>146</sup> Paul Dimeo, ‘Colonial Bodies, Colonial Sport: ‘Martial’ Punjabis, ‘Effeminate’ Bengalis and the Development of Indian Football’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19:1 (2002), 72-90; Satadru Sen, ‘Schools, athletes and confrontation: The student body in colonial India’, in James Mills and Satadru Sen (eds.) *Confronting the body: The politics of physicality in colonial and post-colonial India* (New Delhi, 2004), 60-65; Patrick McDevitt, ‘The King of Sports: Polo in late Victorian and Edwardian India’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20:1 (2003), 1-27.

<sup>147</sup> S. Muzumdar, *Strongmen Through the Ages* (Lucknow, 1942), 17.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> ‘Great Indian Wrestler’, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 January (1892), 7.

<sup>150</sup> ‘The Champion English Wrestler. A Hindoo Conquers Tom Canon’, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 23 January (1892), 7.



Fig 1.9: 'Gymnast from the Bombay Theatre of Varieties at the India and Ceylon Exhibition 1896', British Library, London.

Following Bux's victory, several Hindu wrestlers travelled abroad to compete against European wrestlers, each having trained with Indian clubs.<sup>151</sup> In 1899 Motilal Nehru travelled to Paris with Hindu wrestler Gulam for Gulam's victory over Heavyweight Champion Ahmad Madrali. That Nehru, a political activist, travelled with Gulam demonstrated the intimate relationship between Indian politics and sport at this time.<sup>152</sup> While Gulam's victory was disputed, his presence saw commentators, such as physical culture chronicler Edmond Desbonnet, label him as one of the era's greatest wrestlers.<sup>153</sup> These European sojourns were causing Englishmen to re-evaluate ideas about Hindu men, albeit marginally. Writing in *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture* in 1900, Lord began by discussing Hindu men's

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<sup>151</sup> This was a particularly brave decision, as many Hindus believed that crossing the sea would result in the loss of their caste. Jake Shannon, *Say Uncle! Catch-As-Catch Can Wrestling and the Roots of Ultimate Fighting, Pro Wrestling & Modern Grappling* (Toronto, 2011), 160.

<sup>152</sup> Nat Fleischer, *From Milo To Londos: The Story of Wrestling From 2000 BC to 1936* (New York, 1936), 14; Maria Misra, *Vishnu's crowded temple: India since the Great Rebellion* (Yale, 2008), 61.

<sup>153</sup> Muzumdar, *Strongmen Through the Ages*, 18; Edmond Desbonnet, *Les rois de la force: histoire de tous les hommes forts depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à nos jours: avec 733 photographies et dessins* (Paris, 1910), 401. Translated by author.

effeminacy, before acknowledging that some were exceptionally strong. Illustrating this was a photograph of a Bengali club swinger with the caption, “A real wielder of Indian clubs.”<sup>154</sup>

Following Gulam’s victory in Paris, Bhuttan Singh and Ganga Brahmin travelled to England in the early 1900s. Dispatching several wrestlers with ease, the Hindu duo quickly caught the public’s attention. One admirer was Shaw Desmond, an art critic, who gushingly wrote that Singh wielded unimaginably heavy clubs, far heavier than any Englishman could handle.<sup>155</sup> Indian clubs had become an extension of Hindu wrestlers’ physical capital and were used to challenge claims of Hindu effeminacy. Importantly, Singh’s victories had domestic ramifications, as inspired by Singh, numerous Bengali men joined *akharas*.<sup>156</sup> Evidence that the Hindu physical culture movement had truly challenged effeminacy claims came in 1910 when Ghulam Muhammad (‘The Great Gama’) travelled to England to compete in the wrestling world championships. Financed by Mishra, a Bengal millionaire, Gama’s journey sought to prove conclusively that Hindus were ‘manly’. Once in England Gama publically boasted that he could defeat any wrestler within thirty minutes, a claim he substantiated with victories over highly regarded American wrestler, Benjamin Roller and World Champion, Stanislaus Zbyszko. Further victories over Deriaz, Lemm, and Peterson solidified Gama’s fighting reputation.<sup>157</sup> Such victories caused some Englishmen great anxiety, as highlighted by *Health and Strength*’s editor in 1910

I received letters from readers in India pointing out that if they [Indian wrestlers] kept on winning, their victories would give a dangerous fillip to the seditions amongst our dusky subjects that menace the integrity of our Indian Empire.<sup>158</sup>

Gama’s physical capital was a source of both anxiety and fascination for Englishmen. Percy Longhurst later revealed that he and others regularly observed Gama training during his stay. Such men left the gymnasium with the feeling that “the Indian system of training... has

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<sup>154</sup> C. Lord, ‘Physical Culture among the Natives in India’, *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture*, Vol. IV: January to June (London, 1900), 103-108.

<sup>155</sup> Muzumdar, *Strongmen Through the Ages*, 25; In 1937 *Health and Strength* magazine reported that Singh wielded 100-pound Indian clubs in each hand. W. L. Parsley, ‘Wrestlers of the Rajahs’, *Health and Strength*, 20 March (1937), 400-401.

<sup>156</sup> Misra, *Vishnu’s crowded temple: India since the Great Rebellion*, 61.

<sup>157</sup> Callie Elizabeth Maddox, *Postcolonial play: Encounters with sport and physical culture in contemporary India* (University of Maryland, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 2012), 69-71.

<sup>158</sup> Sen, *Nation at Play*, 170.

results beyond the development of great strength.”<sup>159</sup> Given the shock that Gama’s presence caused in England, it is unsurprising that he returned to India a national hero.<sup>160</sup> His adherence to Hindu physical culture, such as club swinging, had challenged effeminacy claims and brought a newfound respect for Hindu practices. The relationship between Indian clubs and the Hindu physical culture movement’s wider aims were partly realised through Gama’s successes and it is interesting to note that during a Royal Tour of India in 1922 the Prince of Wales presented Gama with a silver *gada* in recognition of his talents. This *gada*, an Indian club precursor, demonstrated the strong links between clubs and a specified sort of ancient Hindu masculinity. As one commentator argued, “seeing Gama holding this mace, it would appear that the epic hero Bhima [mentioned in section one] had been reincarnated.”<sup>161</sup> The gift demonstrated that colonisers were fully aware of Indian clubs’ importance for Hindu physical culture. While Hindu wrestlers did not eradicate colonial claims that Bengali men were effeminate, they forced significant re-evaluations. From the period 1860 to 1914 it is clear that Hindu training methods, of which club swinging was an integral part, were used as political tools to challenge colonial stereotypes and, at times, did so very successfully.

## Conclusion

In surveying Indian clubs’ nineteenth and early twentieth-century story it is clear that this seemingly innocuous form of exercise carried strong political agendas for both coloniser and colonised. For Hindus, the clubs were multifaceted objects revered for their religious symbolism and training application in the shaping of male bodies. The pre-colonial Hindu relationship with Indian clubs demonstrated how exercise was used to produce new body types and ‘enhance’ one’s masculine qualities. This relationship never left the Hindu zeitgeist, as evidenced by the Hindu physical culture movement’s emergence in the 1860s. The movement represented an overt attempt to challenge claims about Hindu masculinity, and in doing so, re-invigorated pre-colonial ideas about exercise’s religious and masculine importance. While it can be viewed as an Indian response to an Indian problem, it is interesting to draw parallels between the movement and other nineteenth-century movements in occupied territories such as Hungary or Ireland, which used indigenous practices such as

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<sup>159</sup> Percy Longhurst, ‘On Gama’, *Health and Strength*, 4 May (1935), 21-24.

<sup>160</sup> Joseph Alter, ‘Gama the Great: Indian Nationalism and the World Wrestling Championships of 1910 and 1928’, *Academy of the Punjab in North America 1998 Paper* (<http://apnaorg.com/prose-content/english-articles/page-76/article-8/index.html>)[accessed 12 January 2016].

<sup>161</sup> Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's body: sex, diet, and the politics of nationalism* (Pennsylvania, 2000), 131.

horseracing and hurling for similar purposes.<sup>162</sup> While comparisons between such movements are attractive, the Hindu physical culture movement was distinct in sending athletes abroad to challenge Europeans. Implicitly or explicitly, each Hindu wrestler acted as an ambassador for the movement, and while their successes did not eradicate claims about Hindu effeminacy, they forcefully challenged it. That such wrestlers used Indian clubs to shape and build their bodies marks the clubs as an influential, if unlikely, political object.

Although it is attractive to view such tours in a European context, their domestic reception was equally important. While Gulam, Singh and Gama undoubtedly challenged claims about Hindu men, the tours' real successes arguably came from their Indian reception. As news spread to Bengal, Calcutta and other cities of Hindu wrestlers' successes, scores of men enlisted in the *akharas* to engage in traditional physical culture practices such as club swinging. Many of these tours were undertaken in the hope of encouraging Hindu men to begin training, an objective that was often achieved. As an object, Indian clubs thus evolved from a highly religious and masculine object into a political tool aimed at challenging colonial claims and achieving greater societal standing. That the clubs were used to modify Hindu bodies in the pursuit of this goal reiterates the importance of the physical body as a site of nationalist struggle.

The colonial adoption of the clubs was an equally fascinating and no less political process. Initially viewed by East Indian Company officials with curiosity, club swinging soon became an accepted health practice for those struggling in the Indian climate. The adoption of Indian clubs represented concerns amongst British medical and army officials regarding mortality rates in India and demonstrated how such concerns drove change in colonial medical practices. The decision to prescribe club swinging to at-risk colonisers undoubtedly influenced the manner in which the clubs were viewed. Whereas Hindu wrestlers saw the clubs primarily through religious and masculine lenses, doctors tended to view them only with reference to the physiological functions of the European body. The result of this was a general disenchantment of the clubs, a process by which the clubs' rich cultural heritage of warriors and Gods was replaced with sterile medical discussions. Once an accepted medical practice for Company employees and soldiers, the clubs were modified to suit English demands. Whereas traditional Hindu clubs, oftentimes weighing up to seventy-pounds would

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<sup>162</sup> Ganneri, 'The Debate on 'Revival' and the Physical Culture Movement', 127.

be used by a handful of wrestlers over a day, English clubs were designed to train mass numbers of soldiers. English clubs were significantly shorter and lighter than traditional clubs, making the differences between English and Hindu uses visible in the clubs themselves. Related to this, the bodies produced by such physical culture practices differed greatly. The Hindu practice tended to build noticeably muscular physiques while the English practice built more sinewy athletic bodies. This meant that one's physical appearance indicated whether they trained with Hindu or English clubs.

Although Hindu meanings for the clubs appeared relatively durable over the nineteenth-century, British ideas about the club's potential quickly changed after the 1857 Rebellion. Prior to the insurrection, Indian clubs were used primarily as a health building device for Company and army men, while the post-Rebellion period saw clubs used primarily as a disciplining tool for the scores of Indian men enlisted in the Indian army. That the early 1860s saw Indian clubs re-labelled as 'regulation clubs' by army officials was indicative of their new meanings. That orders issued in England changed the manner in which clubs were used in India reveals a transnational dialogue between English and Indian physical culture practices. A dialogue weighted in favour of English voices. Indeed, it was modifications to mainland English army practices that led to the decline of martial club swinging in twentieth-century India. The clubs' final use as a prop in relay races was an ignominious end for a once revered object. A final treatment so far removed from the respect Hindu exercisers afforded the clubs over several centuries.

## Chapter Two: Indian Club Swinging in Victorian England to 1870

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Although Indian clubs had long held religious, martial and masculine meanings in India, their English assimilation brought with it potential for new connotations. Unbound by cultural strictures, doctors, army officials and fitness instructors were relatively free to ascribe diverse meanings to the clubs. Clubs were used to correct ‘deformed’ women and build masculine figures. Similarly they were used to strengthen and invigorate men perceived as overly intellectual and to form robust women. This multiplicity of functions carried with it class, gender and age dimensions that simply did not exist in the Indian context, thereby demonstrating how this ‘emptied’ form of exercise was widely embraced in English society in the nineteenth-century. Furthermore, as the clubs diffused throughout England, their possibilities continued to expand.

Exploring Indian club swinging in England from the early nineteenth-century to the 1870s, this chapter discusses how Indian clubs were brought to England, what their initial uses were and how they came to be popularised amongst England’s upper and middle-classes.

Accordingly, section one addresses the conditions that made Indian clubs’ acceptance possible with reference to medical practice, army reforms and changes in England’s fitness field, thereby demonstrating the clubs’ initial English contexts. Stemming from this, section two focuses on the first English club swinging texts and their messages regarding upper and upper-middle class femininity and masculinity. This includes an examination of the messages themselves and, more importantly, their reception. Finally, section three examines club swinging’s popularity amongst England’s wider middle-class from the 1850s with reference to institutional and recreational settings. As more exercisers began training with Indian clubs, gender identities attached to the clubs changed, something that will be examined in the concluding section.

### **I**

#### **The arrival of Indian clubs in England**

Somewhat surprisingly, Indian clubs’ introduction into English medical fields in the 1830s represented a continuation of medical practices dating from the eighteenth-century, which

sought to use exercise as treatment.<sup>1</sup> While concern for bodily health was not an eighteenth or nineteenth-century phenomena, scholars have identified the eighteenth-century as a time when interest in public and private health grew exponentially.<sup>2</sup> This interest in private health encouraged numerous physicians, such as George Cheyne, to recommend physical exercise as treatment from the beginning of the century.<sup>3</sup> Although Cheyne was perhaps the most notable physician practising this form of medicine, he was not alone.<sup>4</sup> While Cheyne and others normalised the practice of exercise as medicine, Andry's *Orthopaedia* (1741), established club swinging as a recognised medical practice. Originally published in France, by 1743 *Orthopaedia* had reached England to great acclaim.<sup>5</sup> Dwelling primarily on correcting physical deformities, Andry's teachings included a focus on swinging ninepins to develop muscular strength and endurance.<sup>6</sup> For Todd, this practice normalised club swinging for the English medical community.<sup>7</sup> A claim validated by Harrison's nineteenth-century medical text on Indian clubs, which credited Andry's treatments.<sup>8</sup>

The medical community's increased interest in exercise was undoubtedly aided by what Haley identified as an increased societal desire for robust health at the dawn of the nineteenth-century.<sup>9</sup> This desire was spurred on by the perceived inability of physicians to contain the surge of cholera and consumption epidemics that plagued England in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>10</sup> Such pandemics encouraged the growth of new and alternative forms of

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<sup>1</sup> This tradition arguably dated back even further as sixteenth-century writings discussed the use of dumb-bells in treating health conditions. David Webster and Doug Gillon, *Barbells and Beefcake: Illustrated History of Bodybuilding* (New York, 1979), 12.

<sup>2</sup> G. Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1988, trans. J. Birrell), 8; D. Porter and R. Porter, *Patients' Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1989), 34; Roberta J. Park, 'Concern for Health and Exercise as Expressed in the Writings of 18th Century Physicians and Informed Laymen (England, France, Switzerland)', *Research Quarterly: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 47:4 (1976), 756-758.

<sup>3</sup> George Cheyne, *Essay of Health and Long Life* (London, 1724), 89; George Cheyne, *The English malady: or a Treatise of nervous diseases of all kinds; as spleen, vapours, lowness of spirits, hypochondriacal, and hysterical distempers, etc.* (London, 1734), 80.

<sup>4</sup> Charles F. Mullett, *Public Baths and Health in England, 16th-18th Century* (Baltimore, 1946), 43-50.

<sup>5</sup> David M. Turner, 'Introduction', in David Turner and Kevin Stagg (eds.), *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity: Bodies, Images and Experiences*, (London, 2006), 1-15.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolas Andry, *Orthopaedia, Volume Two* (London, 1743), 219.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Macon, 1998), 22.

<sup>8</sup> C.H. Harrison, *Deformities of the spine and chest, successfully treated by exercise alone; and without extension, pressure, or division of muscles* (London, 1842), 133.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, 1978), 12; Jack Berryman, 'Exercise is Medicine: a Historical Perspective', *Current Sports Medicine Reports*, 9:4 (2010), 195-201.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Health, medicine, and society in Victorian England* (Oxford, 2010), 59; David McLean, *Public Health and Politics in the Age of Reform: cholera, the state and the Royal Navy in Victorian Britain* (London, 2005), 1-20.

medicine, as advertised in both popular and medical journals.<sup>11</sup> While the advertising accompanying these new medicines often preyed on public anxieties about death and disease, they revealed the extent of doctors' and patients' fears. By the 1840s, the idea that prevention was more important than cure emerged amongst some physicians.<sup>12</sup> This approach was not confined to communicable diseases, as English doctors also applied it to social diseases such as obesity and frailty.<sup>13</sup> The message that exercise from an early age diminished the chances of being 'afflicted' with disease in later life became something of a medical mantra for portions of the populace.<sup>14</sup> The precedent of club swinging as a medical practice, coupled with a willingness to engage in physical activity for medicinal purposes, greatly facilitated Indian clubs' introduction into the English medical field.

Although Indian clubs' introduction into the medical field represented continuity in medical practices, their incorporation into the martial field was an unprecedented event driven by societal anxieties about Englishmen's health following the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).<sup>15</sup> While such anxieties had existed during the late eighteenth-century, the post-Napoleonic period saw them become a much greater talking point for England's politicians and populace.<sup>16</sup> Despite France's defeat, the war demonstrated English troops' poor conditioning and anachronistic tactics.<sup>17</sup> Such deficiencies were apparent during the war itself and had encouraged the Duke of York to establish a military college and training school in 1813.<sup>18</sup> In the post-war period, efforts intensified with Henry Torrens, Adjutant-General to the British Forces, creating a new training manual for English recruits in the early 1820s.<sup>19</sup> Torrens sought to 'modernise' Sir David Dundas's training manual, which was published in 1788 in reaction to the American Revolutionary War.<sup>20</sup> Dundas's manual went largely unchallenged

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<sup>11</sup> David M. Turner, and Alun Withey, 'Technologies of the Body: Polite Consumption and the Correction of Deformity in Eighteenth-Century England', *History*, 99:338 (2014), 775-796.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Harvey Davies, *The promotion and pursuit of health, 1780-1880* (unpublished D.Phil. dissertation, University of Leicester, 2009), 1-10.

<sup>13</sup> William Wadd, *Comments on corpulency, lineaments of leanness, mems on diet and dietetics* (London 1829), 2-10.

<sup>14</sup> See Ginnie Smith, 'Prescribing the rules of health: Self-help and Advice in the late eighteenth century', in Roy Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practicioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), 249-256.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Torrens, *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army* (London, 1824), V.

<sup>16</sup> Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, 'Introduction' in Barker, Hannah, and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London, 1997), 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Edward M. Spiers, 'The Armed Forces', in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to 19th-Century Britain* (Swansea, 2006), 79-83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>19</sup> Torrens, *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army*, V.

<sup>20</sup> Trevor May, *Military Barracks* (Swansea, 2002), 25; Deborah Avant, 'From mercenary to citizen armies:

until Torrens tackled troop-training in 1824.<sup>21</sup> That England and her armies had been involved in over thirty conflicts of varying intensity from 1788 to 1824 demonstrated the respect held for Dundas's work.<sup>22</sup> Though Torrens adhered to many of Dundas's methods, he did modify training systems, most notably by introducing "wooden club" training.<sup>23</sup>

There are several reasons to believe that Torrens's wooden club was an Indian club of sorts. First, Torrens's descriptions of the club and its accompanying exercises bore a strong resemblance to later Indian club routines. Indeed, the wooden club's benefits of "opening the recruits' chest, and giving freedom to the muscles", were identical to that of Indian clubs.<sup>24</sup> Coupled with this, from 1803 to 1805, Torrens was stationed in English occupied Indian territories, which as discussed in chapter one, often exposed Englishmen to physical culture exercises such as club swinging.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Torrens headed a group of English and Indian troops, both of whom were known to swing Indian clubs.<sup>26</sup> Postulations aside, Torrens's recommendation regarding club swinging was the first time England's army formally embraced such equipment and was a reflection of the army's openness to new ideas in the post-Napoleonic period.

The clubs' martial adoption was particularly significant for the fitness field, as it was a military instructor who introduced Indian clubs to the wider public. In 1825 P.H. Clias, Army and Navy Superintendent of Gymnastic Exercises, published a callisthenic work for England's upper-classes. Drawing upon three years experience training troops, Clias's work promised to correct health, build strength and resolve anxiety.<sup>27</sup> Inspired by German physical-educator Gutsmuths, Clias's routines used gymnastic exercises to improve physical

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Explaining change in the practice of war', *International Organization*, 54:1 (2000), 41-72.

<sup>21</sup> David Dundas, *Principles of Military Movements, Chiefly Applied to Infantry, Illustrated by Manoeuvres of the Prussian Troops and by an Outline of the British Campaigns in Germany during the war of 1757... with an appendix* (London, 1788), 87-88. On the popularity of Dundas's work, see Philip Haythornthwaite, *British Napoleonic Infantry Tactics 1792-1815* (Swansea, 2008) 4; J.H Stocqueler, *The British Soldier: An Anecdotal History of the British Army from Its Earliest Formation to the Present Time* (London, 1857), 86; May, *Military barracks*, 25. See also Hew Strachan, *From Waterloo to Balaclava: tactics, technology, and the British Army, 1815-1854* (Cambridge, 1985), 14-16.

<sup>22</sup> Robert M. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the abyss: British and American peacekeeping doctrine and practice after the Cold War* (Westport, 2004), 56

<sup>23</sup> Torrens, *Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army*, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> 'Major-General Sir Henry Torrens, K.G.B.', *The Annual Biography and Obituary*, 13 (London, 1828), 58-64.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Heinrich Clias, *An Elementary Course of Gymnastic Exercises: Intended to Develop and Improve the Physical Powers of Man, Etc.* (London, 1825, 4th Edition), 1-10.

capital through strength building.<sup>28</sup> Complementing such exercises was the ‘Indian club’, a label Clias seemingly coined.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, Clias’s gymnastic exercises were unique in a field that often centred on athletic and rural sports for exercise.<sup>30</sup> Illustrating Clias’s importance was the *Morning Post*’s assertion that Clias was singlehandedly responsible for introducing ‘callisthenics’ into the English lexicon.<sup>31</sup> Amidst numerous voices, Clias distinguished himself owing to his impressive physique. In 1823 the *Literary Gazette* reported as much,

The form of Captain Clias is by far the most perfect of any man who has ever been exhibited in England. In him we discovered all those markings which we see in the antique, and which do not appear on the living models, from their body not being sufficiently developed by a regular system of scientific exercises, such as Captain Clias.<sup>32</sup>

Some went so far as to argue that it was Clias’s impressive physical capital, as opposed to his knowledge, which made his works so popular.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, Clias’s teachings struck a cord amongst interested parties, as evidenced by his highly attended clinics for upper-class students seeking to build a comparable physical capital.<sup>34</sup> Thus, when *The Morning Post* credited Clias with exciting “great interest in the upper-classes of society” for exercising, few objected.<sup>35</sup> Although others discussed Indian clubs immediately after Clias, it was Clias’s work that became the reference point.<sup>36</sup> When Walker set out to write a definitive account of English athletic pursuits in 1834, he credited Clias as a pioneer.<sup>37</sup>

The assimilation of Indian clubs into English society proved to be a relatively unproblematic affair. For physicians, the clubs represented a piece of equipment used to maintain health and

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<sup>28</sup> Peter McIntosh, *Landmarks in the history of physical education* (London, 1957), 223.

<sup>29</sup> This was the first mention of an Indian club in an English work. Clias, *An Elementary Course of Gymnastic Exercises*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Andy Croll, ‘Popular Leisure and Sport’, in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to 19th-Century Britain* (Swansea, 2006), 397.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Calisthenic Exercises’, *Morning Post*, 12 April (1826), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Clias, *An Elementary Course of Gymnastic Exercises*, XIX.

<sup>33</sup> Franz Lieber, ‘A Review: Art. VI. - A Treatise on Gymnastics: Taken Chiefly from the German of F. L. Jahn’, *American Quarterly Review*, 3:3 (1828), 139.

<sup>34</sup> In 1823, Clias had 1,400 regular clients, a figure that rose to 2,000 by 1826. Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 39.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Callisthenic Exercises’, *The Morning Post*, 11 April (1826), 3.

<sup>36</sup> George Roland *An Introductory Course of Modern Gymnastic Exercises* (Edinburgh, 1832), 17-22.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Walker, *British manly exercises: in which rowing and sailing are now first described, and riding and driving are for the first time given in a work of this kind...* (London, 1834), 5.

prevent disease. For army officials, the clubs represented changes in training techniques, which sought to build a more robust English soldier. Finally for exercisers, the clubs were a means to improve or correct one's physical health and fitness. Introduced to the English public in this diverse way, little mention was made of the clubs' origins or previous connotations. Stemming from this, the need to rationalise the use of Indian clubs, as had occurred amongst civil and military colonisers in India, did not manifest itself in Victorian England. As far as exercisers were concerned, Indian clubs were presented as neutral and banal objects that served an important health function.

## II

### **'Intelligent Men and Deformed Ladies': Indian Clubs and England's Upper-Classes**

Patricia Vertinsky previously argued that Victorian science created many narratives of fitness that either implicitly or explicitly, focused upon gender-related notions of health and strength.<sup>38</sup> If she is correct, Indian clubs are an ideal case study, as beginning in the 1830s numerous instructors successfully used Indian clubs to help exercisers become 'better' men and women. Importantly, Indian clubs were also used to reinvent and challenge these normative gender identities, thereby lending credence to Vertinsky's claim of multiple narratives. Simultaneously as fitness instructors were recommending club swinging, English physicians began using Indian clubs to treat mental and physical ailments, while echoing instructors' views regarding the clubs and gender identities. Discussing Indian clubs in early to mid-Victorian England from 1830 to 1850, this section will first examine training manuals to explore how Indian clubs reinforced and challenged masculine and feminine norms. Following this, the use of Indian clubs by English doctors to treat mental and physical disorders will be reviewed with an eye to gender identities.

Although Indian clubs would be ubiquitous in English society by 1900, their initial users derived primarily from England's upper-classes, namely the aristocracy, gentry and aspiring upper-middle classes.<sup>39</sup> This was reflected in the attendance lists for callisthenic classes and

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<sup>38</sup> Patricia Vertinsky, 'Making and Marking Gender: Bodybuilding and the Medicalization of the Body from one Century's End to Another', *Culture, Sport, Society*, 2:1 (1999), 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> This paper understands upper-class during this period as referring to both the nobility, those who for generations had inherited lands along with titles and the landed gentry. Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, 2007), 5.

also in training manuals, which made clear that their writings were not aimed the “vulgar and inferior classes.”<sup>40</sup> While several training manuals were published in the 1830s, it was Walker’s *British Manly Exercises* (1834) that proved the most popular.<sup>41</sup> Although Walker seemingly stemmed from the gentry, his writings spoke to both upper and upper-middle class readers seeking to use exercise to distinguish oneself.<sup>42</sup> Walker’s audience thus seemed to accept his assertion that the physical body could be a signifier of social class.<sup>43</sup> The popularity of his work also stemmed from its holistic approach to exercise, which emphasised the reciprocity between physical and mental strength.<sup>44</sup> This holism was made clear in the monograph’s opening section, which stated that ideally, man’s education consisted of reading and exercising. A simple schematic that Walker believed Englishmen had forgotten in favour of mental exertion.<sup>45</sup> This was no trivial matter either, as Walker was keen to stress. Those men possessing the rare combination of physical and mental strength could “confer beauty of form...impart an elegant air and graceful manners...inspire confidence in difficult situations and...render the most important services to others.”<sup>46</sup> Such an explicit connection between strength and loftier ideas about masculine behaviour was a recurring theme in Walker’s work and his suggestion that “elegance distinguished the gentleman” enticed readers.<sup>47</sup> In this way, Walker created a narrative linking nebulous ideas about health to masculinity.

Reviewers appeared to agree. According to the *Sporting Review*, few books were as popular amongst the upper-classes, noting: “the substitution of manly exercises...for effeminate and useless plays was a speculation as full of advantage as promise. It only needed that the

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<sup>40</sup> Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 94-96; Walker, *British manly exercises*, 263.

<sup>41</sup> By 1860 Walker’s book was in its tenth edition. McIntosh, *Landmarks in the history of physical education*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Walker regularly affixed the term esquire after his name in his correspondences suggesting he was from the gentry. See for example ‘Advertisements & Notices’, *The Examiner*, 3 December (1837), 11; Donald Walker, *Exercises for Ladies* (London, 1836), X. This perhaps explains why Shepard labeled Walker as a magistrate and an author. Roy Shepard, *An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness* (Toronto, 2015), 647. Having corresponded with Shepard, he was unfortunately unable to locate his notes regarding Walker’s magistrate career.

<sup>43</sup> S. Gunn, ‘Translating Bourdieu: cultural capital and the English middle-class in historical perspective’, *The British journal of sociology*, 56:1 (2005), 61; L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes*, (London, 1987), 397-415; Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody’s angels: middle-class women and domestic ideology in Victorian culture* (Cornell, 1995), 1-24.

<sup>44</sup> Jan Todd, ‘The strength builders’ a history of barbells, dumbbells and Indian clubs’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20:1, (2003), 73; Roberta J. Park, ‘Biological thought, athletics and the formation of a ‘man of character’: 1830–1900’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24:12, (2007), 1543.

<sup>45</sup> Walker, *British Manly Exercises*, 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

system be taught...”<sup>48</sup> A system Walker seemingly created. The *Literary Gazette* labelled it: “a capital work.... a provocative to manly sports and exercises - exercises far too much neglected among us.”<sup>49</sup> Even notionally critical reviews appeared favourable, as Bureaud-Riofrey’s criticism that the work’s exercises outstripped men’s existing fitness levels was more a charge against Englishmen than Walker.<sup>50</sup> The critical appraisal of Walker’s work was echoed amongst consumers who ensured it enjoyed numerous reprints, suggesting that Walker’s norms were becoming desirable.<sup>51</sup> Such norms were not confined to adults as the 1839 children’s book *Sergeant Bell and his Raree-show* illustrated. Sergeant Bell informed children that in order to be strong and courageous men they had to engage in ‘manly’ exercises such as club swinging.<sup>52</sup>

How did one engage in ‘manly’ exercises? Although the monograph provided information on everything from balancing to walking, Walker argued that Indian clubs were one of the most effective ‘manly’ exercises. This was demonstrated in Walker’s descriptions of exercises five and six with the clubs, pictured below. Seeking to emphasise the clubs’ utility, Walker declared, “as an adjunct to training, *there is nothing in the whole round of gymnastics* [emphasis added] that will be found of more essential service than this exercise with the Indian clubs...”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> John William Carleton, *The Sporting review* (London, 1842), 147-148.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Walker’s British Manly Exercises’, *The Literary Gazette: A Weekly Journal of Literature, Science...*, 18 (London, 1834), 153.

<sup>50</sup> Antoine Martin Bureaud-Riofrey, *Treatise on Physical Education: Specially Adapted to Young Ladies* (London, 1838), 77.

<sup>51</sup> By 1888, Walker’s work had gone through eleven separate editions. Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Tegg and George Mogridge, *Sergeant Bell and his Raree-show* (London, 1839), 397.

<sup>53</sup> Walker, *British Manly Exercises*, 25-26.

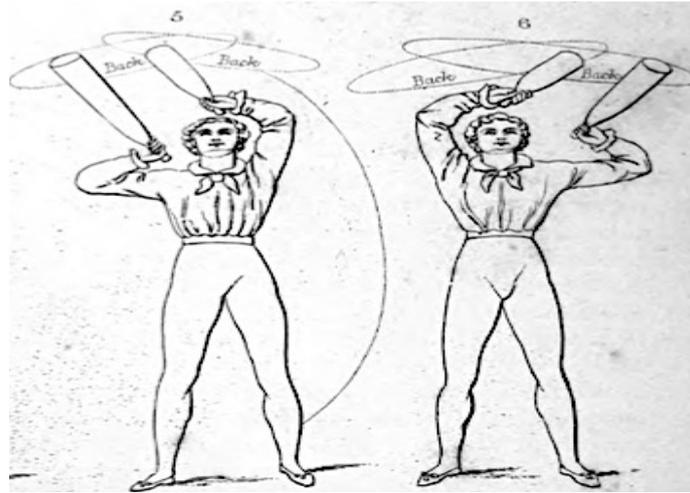


Fig 2.1: 'Exercises Five and Six', Donald Walker, *British Manly Exercises: in which rowing and sailing are now first described, and riding and driving are for the first time given in a work of this kind...*(London, 1834), 26.

It is interesting to note that the men in Walker's sketching exercised in non-descript uniforms at a time when English athletic attire was increasingly being delineated based on specified sporting pursuits.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that the club exercises were primarily aimed at laymen, as opposed to athletes.

Walker re-emerged in 1836 with an entirely different work aimed at Englishwomen. While Walker's work for Englishmen had only alluded to their potential for middle-class readers, his work on Englishwomen specifically discussed the "enlarged and powerful" middle-class facing his readers.<sup>55</sup> Catered to both upper and upper-middle class women, Walker's work sought to aid sedentary upper-class women and provide a means of social mobility through compartment for the upper-middle class.<sup>56</sup> In a highly charged opening section, Walker's *Exercises for Ladies* argued, "few women are exempt from some degree of deformity, which always increases unless means of prevention are...employed."<sup>57</sup> In identifying these deformities Walker implicitly revealed larger ideals regarding upper-class women.

Explaining the deformities' origins, Walker cited excessive housework, ungainly postures and sedentary lifestyles as the main culprits.<sup>58</sup> To avoid deformities, women were instructed

<sup>54</sup> See Dave Day and Samantha-Jayne Oldfield, 'Delineating professional and amateur athletic bodies in Victorian England', *Sport in history*, 35:1 (2015), 19-45.

<sup>55</sup> Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> Works aimed at sedentary upper-class Englishwomen had been published for at least a decade. See for example Mason, Marion, *On the utility of exercise: or a few observations on the advantages to be derived from its salutary effects, by means of calisthenic exercises, as approved by some of the most eminent gentlemen of the faculty in London* (London, 1827), 2, which was dedicated to upper-class Englishwomen.

<sup>57</sup> Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, XV.

<sup>58</sup> Walker also used the more benign term "one-sidedness". *Ibid.*, 263-265.

to delegate rigorous household duties to their servants, a recommendation Todd argued reinforced a bifurcation between women's activities that deprived upper-class women of real exercise.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, Walker recommended purposeful exercise, a suggestion that revealed divisions between the sexes' exercise systems. According to Walker such divisions stemmed from the fact that "woman, by her less stature, weaker organisation, predominant sensibility, and peculiar function of multiplying the species, was not destined by nature to such toilsome labours as man."<sup>60</sup>

Walker did not attribute these statements to mere opinion, but rather to the informed studies of anthropologists, physicians and educators. Walker's appropriation of such studies for his work substantiates Vertinsky's famous argument that the medical community, and those inspired by it, often depicted women as "eternally wounded" during this period.<sup>61</sup> Owing to woman's frailty, Walker's exercises were lightweight and aimed at correcting women's aforementioned 'deformities'. Shunning horse-riding, leaping and even excessive walking, Walker turned towards lightweight Indian clubs to help preserve women's natural grace.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly the Indian clubs, which Walker recommended for men, were deemed unsuitable for women. Owing to the fact that "the constitution of women, bears only moderate exercise", Walker created a 'female friendly' Indian sceptre, shown below.<sup>63</sup> Lighter and longer than Indian clubs, Indian sceptres were deemed ideal for female exercisers, as it tested them without causing unnecessary strain.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 48. Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 100.

<sup>60</sup> Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, 75.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 61. Patricia Vertinsky, *The eternally wounded woman: Women, doctors, and exercise in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1990), 10-12.

<sup>62</sup> Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, 109.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 72.



Fig 2.2: 'The Indian Sceptre Exercise', Donald Walker, *Exercises for Ladies* (London, 1836), 112.

It is tempting to make comparisons between Walker's clubs and his thoughts about gender. Men exercised with sturdy and robust clubs, much like the men Walker sought to build. Likewise Indian spectres were slender, ornate and beautifully decorated, qualities Walker sought for Englishwomen. Walker's illustrations are equally fascinating in that they depicted women exercising without corsets, which contrasted with other training manuals.<sup>64</sup> Such illustrations were also at odds with common exercise practices, as contemporary articles in the *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal* regularly lamented women's 'foolishness' for exercising in corsets.<sup>65</sup> While this could suggest that Walker intended his exercises to be more vigorous than corsets would allow, the women's ankle length dresses, similar to normal daywear attire, suggest that the exercises could be performed during the day, without much exertion.<sup>66</sup>

Though not as popular as *British Manly Exercises*, Walker's *Exercises for Ladies* met with a generally positive reception. Within months of publication, *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine* deemed it "invaluable" and a "first class work."<sup>67</sup> Similarly *The Lady's Magazine* commended Walker for excluding "masculine gymnastics" in favour of those that preserved

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 69-70. Pamela J. Creedon, 'From whalebone to spandex: women and sports journalism in American magazines, photography and broadcasting', in Pamela J. Creedon (ed.) *Women, media and sport: challenging gender values* (London, 1994), 112.

<sup>65</sup> Kathleen E. McCrone, *Playing the game: Sport and the physical emancipation of English women, 1870-1914* (Kentucky, 1988), 218.

<sup>66</sup> Jan Todd, 'The Classical Ideal and Its Impact on the Search for Suitable Exercise: 1774-1830', *Iron Game History*, 2:4 (1992), 7-16.

<sup>67</sup> 'Literature, Reviews & c.', *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine*, Volume One (1836), 16.

women's beauty.<sup>68</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, reserved the greatest praise however when it stated,

We are perfectly certain that without this book there is not a woman in the country who knows how to stand, sit, walk, lie or get up...how they managed to perform these operations for so many years, is to us unaccountable.<sup>69</sup>

The review added that "the moment we go into a room, we can tell whether the young ladies...are Walker's pupils or not."<sup>70</sup> This suggests that Walker's prescriptions had become a measuring stick for femininity and that one's bodily movements were increasingly a point of scrutiny. The impact this Foucauldian gaze had on Englishwomen is difficult to ascertain, although historians commentating on daily life and girl's education in the nineteenth-century have noted concerns amongst some women regarding their posture as a social signifier.<sup>71</sup> This illustrates Walker's success in linking health to ideas of gender, a relationship his reviewers accepted as fact. Walker's exercise system was thus perceived as having a significant effect for women as it impacted the manner in which they held themselves in public.

Given Walker and his reviewers' writings on women, it is perhaps unsurprising that historians have credited Walker with creating a female identity that was weak, subservient and lesser.<sup>72</sup> Contemporary criticisms of his work however suggest that such scholars have perhaps been unfair to Walker, as for many, Walker presented a radical vision of womanhood. *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine* condemned Walker for recommending dumbbells and sceptres for women, believing such tools to be excessively masculine.<sup>73</sup> Similarly Bureaud-Riofrey questioned Indian sceptres' applicability for women, arguing that

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<sup>68</sup> 'Exercises for Ladies. By Donald Walker', *The Lady's Magazine and Museum of the Belles-Letres, Fine Arts, Music, Drama, Fashions & c.*, January (1836), 128.

<sup>69</sup> 'Exercises for Ladies. By Donald Walker', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, July (1836), 56-57.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> In other fields, scholars have used Foucault's gaze theory to argue that health ideals, similar to those discussed here, often caused those 'caught in the gaze' to modify their behavior and undertake health programs to conform to standardized ideals. Hila Haelyon and Moshe Levy, 'Mirror, mirror on the wall: the woman, the gaze and the fitness room', *Sport in Society*, 15:9 (2012), 1196-1208. For works on posture see Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, 1996), 181; Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the bourgeoisie: a history of clothing in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, 1994), 90.

<sup>72</sup> McCrone, *Playing the game*, 100.

<sup>73</sup> 'Exercises for Ladies, founded on physiological principles. By Donald Walker', *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*, Volume One (1836), 376.

while they may be serviceable for boys, women needed gentler exercise.<sup>74</sup> Walker's views on women aside, his work encouraged women to exercise with dumbbells and sceptres, means of exercise similar to those employed by men. *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine* made the implications of this clear in a jocular message,

Should Mr. Walker's advice be followed by our fair ladies of Britain, we are almost certain they would become so strong and muscular, that it would remain a query whether even in case of war we could not easily dispense with at least half our army.<sup>75</sup>

While the army remained a masculine enterprise, some women did use Walker's methods to gain greater employment opportunities and economic freedoms. Beginning in the 1840s, middle-class women such as Leonora Geary, Mrs. Thomas and Madame Ferzi opened independently run Indian sceptre and dancing classes for Englishwomen.<sup>76</sup> Gaining both employment and prestige from their competency with sceptres, such women were able to re-interpret Walker's teachings and forge new societal roles. That each woman openly targeted the "nobility and gentry" of their respective towns demonstrates the demand for upper-class women to engage in club swinging and the opportunities this opened up for middle class women.<sup>77</sup> Similarly for those seeking employment as governesses, the ability to teach sceptre exercises made them more desirable for some employers.<sup>78</sup> Although Walker's views on women were far from egalitarian, some women were able to use his teachings to achieve relative independence and social prestige.

Clubs and spectres were not confined to the fitness field, as the medical community briefly experimented with the devices. While mirroring the openness of their colleagues in India to club swinging, English doctors were distinct in associating strong gender messages to the clubs. This was seen in Coulson's 1836 treatise, which provided several case studies on his upper-class male patients suffering from spinal and chest deformities.<sup>79</sup> Although successful

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<sup>74</sup> Bureaud-Riofrey, *Treatise on Physical Education*, 77.

<sup>75</sup> 'Literature, Reviews & c.', *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine*, 1 (1836), 16

<sup>76</sup> For Leonora Geary see 'Advertisement', *Brighton Gazette*, 12 October (1843), 2; For Mrs. Thompson see, 'Accomplishments', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 16 January (1841), 4; For Madame Ferzi see, 'Advertisement', *Brighton Gazette*, 17 September (1846), 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Cornwell Baron Wilson, *Chronicles of Life in Three Volumes, Vol. III* (London, 1840), 162.

<sup>79</sup> Physicians often described these deformities as the greatest medical challenge of the age. Dr. Ryan, 'Lectures on the Physical Education and Diseases of Infants. From Birth to Puberty', *London Medical and Surgical Journal*, 7 (1835), 297 – 301.

in his treatments, Coulson's notes strongly echoed Walker's masculinity prescriptions. One study discussed a gentleman who "set his frame in a state of tremulous agitation" exercising with "boy's clubs", a state of affairs Coulson was eager to change. For Coulson, men unable to wield 'male' clubs weighing seven-pounds were in need of urgent attention.<sup>80</sup> In this instance Coulson's patient returned to make "use of men's sized clubs", thus becoming an "altered man."<sup>81</sup> Many of Coulson's patients would graduate to male clubs, a point of considerable pride for the doctor.<sup>82</sup> That Coulson presented two-pound clubs as 'boy clubs', and seven-pound clubs as 'male clubs', represented a social construction that sought to classify one's identity based upon strength. While the same publishing house represented Coulson and Walker, which may explain their writings' congruence, doctors Druitt and Bell both used clubs independently in their practices.<sup>83</sup> That unaffiliated doctors exhibited Coulson's willingness to evaluate men based on their club swinging capabilities was indicative of a medical complicity in prompting Walker's 'manly' ideal.

Interestingly, female patients were prescribed Indian clubs for both physical and mental ailments. Regarding the latter, in 1836 Queen Victoria's doctor prescribed club swinging in a bid to treat her melancholy, a prescription given by several other doctors in the early 1830s.<sup>84</sup> Although relatively novel, this practice did exist. Club swinging for physical ailments was, on the other hand, a far more common prescription. Returning to Coulson, he echoed Walker's view that ungainly postures and sedentary existences caused female deformities. For Coulson, "young ladies'...time for amusement is too little...[they] sit for hours at needlework, or in learning what are called accomplishments."<sup>85</sup> Treating the resultant deformities through club swinging, Coulson and others such as Dr. Harrison, dedicated considerable space discussing the physiological differences between the sexes. Detailing everything from women's teeth to digestive organs, women's bodies were deemed lesser or

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<sup>80</sup> William Coulson, *On deformities of the Chest* (London, 1836), 155.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-158.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Robert Druitt, *The surgeon's vade mecum: a manual of modern surgery* (London, 1839), 264; John Bell, *Health and Beauty: An Explanation of the Laws of Growth and Exercise; Through which a Pleasing Contour, Symmetry of Form, and Graceful Carriage of the Body are Acquired: and the Common Deformities of the Spine and Chest Prevented* (Philadelphia, 1838), 223.

<sup>84</sup> "Queen Victoria feeling unwell, ill and light headed...doctor recommended plenty of fresh air, not too much time spent on studying, exercising with Indian Clubs and correct digestion (through proper mastication)." 'Memorandum by Dr. Clark, 29 January 1836', Royal Archives, London, VIC/MAIN/M/5/86. See also Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, 60.

<sup>85</sup> Coulson, *On deformities of the Chest*, 107.

more delicate than those of their male counterparts.<sup>86</sup> This necessitated that women use Indian sceptres as opposed to Indian clubs. While the medical community's role in reinforcing gender stereotypes in the nineteenth-century has been thoroughly examined by historians, it is worth considering their treatments through a more body-centred lens.<sup>87</sup>

Although at first glance the medical club prescriptions seemed to reinforce gender norms for men and women, the exercise itself was distinct from such messages. Club swinging invited men and women to “step off script” and engage in a practice that at its core, was free from words and discussions.<sup>88</sup> The exercise represented a form of ‘extra-daily practice’ in which the actor's club swinging went beyond language constructions and entered a specialised state of consciousness in which attention was paid to the clubs' movement, the rush of blood to the muscles and to one's breath.<sup>89</sup> This ineffable experience was alluded to by medical texts use of words ‘beautiful’, ‘ease’ and ‘grace’ to describe the correct form and accompanying effect.<sup>90</sup> Returning to Walker's illustrations from *Exercises for Ladies*, we see such movements' complexity.



Fig 2.3: ‘Indian Sceptre Exercises’, Donald Walker, *Exercises for Ladies* (London, 1836), 112.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 103 & 155-167. Harrison, *Deformities of the spine and chest, successfully treated by exercise alone*, 22-24.

<sup>87</sup> Two early works on this topic are Vertinsky, *The eternally wounded woman* and Martha H. Verbrugge, *Able-bodied womanhood: Personal health and social change in nineteenth-century Boston* (Oxford, 1988). For more recent works see Hilary Marland, ‘Women, Health, and Medicine’, in Mark Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Medicine* (Oxford, 2011), 484-502; Dominic Janes, ‘Emma Martin and the Manhandled Womb in Early Victorian England’, in Andrew Mangham and Greta Depledge (eds.), *The Female Body in Medicine and Literature* (Liverpool, 2011), 107-118.

<sup>88</sup> Broderick Chow, ‘A Professional Body: Remembering, repeating and working out masculinities in fin-de-siècle physical culture’, *Performance Research*, 20:5 (2015), 30-41.

<sup>89</sup> Phillip Zarrilli, ‘Negotiating performance epistemologies: Knowledges about, in and for’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 21:1 (2001), 31-46.

<sup>90</sup> Harrison, *Deformities of the spine and chest*, 139; Coulson, *On deformities of the Chest*, 156; Walker, *Exercises for Ladies*, 75.

The illustrations could not do justice to the exercisers' experience, which Wacquant referred to as a "total surrender to the exigencies of the field" whereby individuals become indistinguishable from the exercise itself.<sup>91</sup> Although an exerciser's club swinging habitus was informed by other's descriptions, the practice itself existed outside this world.<sup>92</sup> A person's experience in this state, however brief, mirrored that of Hindu wrestlers who had long likened the practice to meditation.<sup>93</sup> Scholars studying a slightly later period have alluded to the importance of this world for women's health and wellbeing, noting that many retreated to this space to 'lose themselves in exercise' and feel better.<sup>94</sup> Similarly Coulson's work included discussions on his male patients' improved mental health following exercise.<sup>95</sup> Free from gender norms, club swinging allowed upper-class men and women to reinterpret their daily experiences through exercising, something that went beyond ideas of gender. Thus while some medical prescriptions may have categorised sexes according to strict norms, physical exercise allowed exercisers to briefly escape from such rigid strictures.

### III

#### **Students, Soldiers and Strongmen: Middle-Class Swingers**

While Indian clubs were initially marketed to England's upper-classes, the mid nineteenth-century saw the clubs propagate throughout society. Beginning in the late 1840s and extending into the 1870s increasing numbers of middle-class men, women and children undertook club swinging, thanks to their institutional and recreational introduction into middle-class lives.<sup>96</sup> In examining the wider middle-class introduction to club swinging, this section will first examine the clubs' institutional introduction through schools and the army to explore how Indian clubs reached a larger audience. Following this, recreational settings such as the 1851 Great Exhibition and middle-class variety shows will be discussed to explore

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<sup>91</sup> Loïc Wacquant, *Body & Soul* (New York, 2004), 11.

<sup>92</sup> Loïc Wacquant, 'Habitus as topic and tool: Reflections on becoming a prizefighter', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 8:1 (2011), 81-92.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph S. Alter, *The wrestler's body: identity and ideology in North India* (California, 1992), 6.

<sup>94</sup> Vertinsky, *The eternally wounded woman*, 206. There is a biological element to this area as physical exercise has been clinically proven to improve mood levels. Peter Thorén et al., 'Endorphins and exercise: physiological mechanisms and clinical implications', *Medicine & science in sports & exercise*, 22:4 (1990), 417-428.

<sup>95</sup> Coulson, *On deformities of the Chest*, 107.

<sup>96</sup> This thesis understands middle-class during this period as being comprised of "all employers, all non-manual employees and all (apart from the landed aristocracy and gentry) people supported by independent income." Richard Trainer, 'The Middle Class', in Martin J. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), 673-714.

how club swinging was informally introduced to middle-class citizens. The section concludes by discussing two seminal middle-class Indian club manuals from this period to explore how club swinging's proliferation brought newer gender prescriptions than were previously imagined.

While some lamented the dearth of opportunities for middle-class children to engage in physical activity in the 1840s, the following decades would see children, or perhaps perceptions of children, become increasingly active.<sup>97</sup> This growth in activity stemmed from a proliferation of middle-class schools and an increased societal emphasis on sport in one's development.<sup>98</sup> Regarding the former, McIntosh argued that many families' hesitancy to send their children to public or church schools led to the growth of schools catered for England's middle-class.<sup>99</sup> Tailored for middle-class sensibilities, many schools offered physical education to appease demands for a holistic education.<sup>100</sup> This desire for physical education was undoubtedly influenced by an increased societal interest in sport, which championed the idea that education encapsulated physical and mental exercise.<sup>101</sup> For some this also included a spiritual dimension, as evidenced in the diverse 'muscular Christianity' movement of the late 1850s, which promoted strength as a means of garnering greater 'spiritual capital'.<sup>102</sup> Secular or otherwise, the idea that education comprised physical and mental components had far reaching consequences for schoolchildren, something evidenced by the proliferation of physical education curricula in numerous schools during the 1850s.<sup>103</sup> As early as 1857, evidence suggests that schools were using Indian clubs.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> I.B. Tenniel, *On the importance of including personal exercise in a scheme of general education* (London, 1845), 9-10.

<sup>98</sup> Kathleen E. McCrone, 'Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game! Sport at the Late Victorian Girls' Public School', *The Journal of British Studies*, 23:2 (1984), 111; Peter McIntosh, *Physical education in England since 1800* (London, 1952), 33-35.

<sup>99</sup> McIntosh, *Physical education in England since 1800*, 33-35. For the growth of the middle-class see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 23; S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London, 2002), 17.

<sup>100</sup> McIntosh, *Physical education in England since 1800*, 33-35.

<sup>101</sup> 'Physical Education in State and Private Schools in Britain in the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries: Elementary Schools and Other Schools', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27:5, (2010), 874-875.

<sup>102</sup> Nick Watson, Stuart Weir, and Stephen Friend, 'The development of muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and beyond', *Journal of Religion and Society*, 7 (2005), 2.

<sup>103</sup> Ida M. Webb, *Women's Physical Education in Great Britain, 1800-1966, with special reference to teacher training* (Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation, University of Leicester, 1967), 10; Stephanie Spencer, 'Advice and ambition in a girls' public day school: the case of Sutton high school, 1884-1924', *Women's History Review*, 9:1 (2000), 75-80.

<sup>104</sup> Alexander Smith, 'City Poems', *The Critic: A Record of Literature, Art, Music, Science and the Drama*, 15 September (1857), 419.

Stemming from an increased lay and army interest in children's education in the 1860s, Indian clubs became much more prevalent in the classroom. From 1862 army fitness instructor Archibald Maclaren published a series of articles on children's exercises, namely, exercise programmes utilising gymnastics, dumb-bells and club swinging.<sup>105</sup> Maclaren's writings would see him inundated with schoolmasters' requests for help, suggesting a positive reception to his work.<sup>106</sup> Apart from encouraging children to exercise with Indian clubs, Maclaren's writings addressed gendered physiological debates. In 1864 Maclaren rebuked those opposing strenuous training for girls,

Girls are naturally weak, and therefore do not require strengthening. Absurd as this may sound – monstrous as this may sound – it is repeated to me many times in the year by people of almost every rank of life and every degree of education.<sup>107</sup>

Maclaren argued that while team sports were unsuitable, Indian clubs, gymnastics and calisthenics were immensely useful in improving girls' physical structures.<sup>108</sup> Although many Englishmen echoed Maclaren's views, it was American authors who penned many of the popular physical education texts circulating in England during this time. The reliance of English schoolmasters on American writings was a particularly sore point for the *National Magazine*, which lamented this occurrence in 1860.<sup>109</sup> Regardless, this situation proved particularly profitable for American writers such as Dio Lewis whose 1862 work *The New Gymnastics for Men, Women and Children* was implemented in numerous English schools.<sup>110</sup> Though focused on different exercises than those recommended by Maclaren, Lewis shared Maclaren's belief that both sexes should engage in rigorous exercises.<sup>111</sup> Empathising with his audience, Lewis also gave heed to the importance of amusement, something reflected in his unconventional club exercises, shown below.

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<sup>105</sup> Archibald Maclaren, 'Management of the Nursery', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 6:32 (1862), 123-129.

<sup>106</sup> Archibald Maclaren, 'Private Schools for Boys: Their Management', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 9 (1864), 383-392.

<sup>107</sup> Archibald Maclaren, 'Girl's Schools', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 10:59 (1864), 409.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>109</sup> 'The Illustrated Family Gymnasium', *National magazine*, 9:49 (1860), 53-54.

<sup>110</sup> According to McCrone, *Playing the Game*, many upper-middle and middle-class London schools used Lewis's system including Miss Buss's London Collegiate School (63). This is corroborated by Walter Harry Green Armytage, 'American Influence on English Education', *Educational Theory*, 7:3 (1957), 176. While many London schools utilized Lewis' system, a letter to the editor of the *Shrewsbury and Salopian Journal* in 1871 indicated the use of Lewis' system by schools in Shropshire. 'On Drill and Gymnastic Exercises, with Music, in our National Elementary Schools', *Eddowes's Shrewsbury and Salopian Journal*, 19 July (1871), 5.

<sup>111</sup> Dio Lewis, *The new gymnastics for men, women, and children* (Boston, 1862), 10-12.

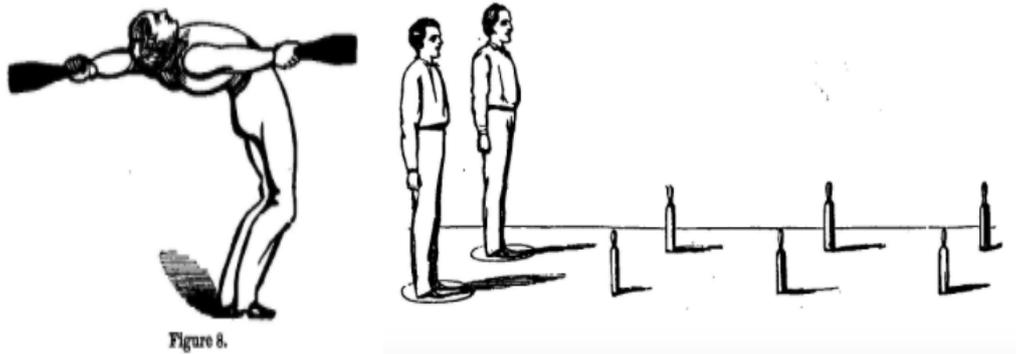


Fig 2.4: ‘Figures 8 and 9’, Dio Lewis, *The new gymnastics for men, women, and children* (Boston, 1862), 93-94.

Figure 8, pictured on the left, represented Lewis’s attempt to make club swinging more varied and enjoyable. Figure 9, pictured on the right, represented, “one of the most exciting games ever devised”, whereby players would leap to each pin before running back to the starting position.<sup>112</sup> Lewis’s awareness of the need for variety and playfulness perhaps explains his works’ English popularity.

Unsurprisingly, given its role in bringing the clubs to England, the army was pivotal once more in introducing Indian clubs to a larger audience. Having previously discussed army reforms following the Crimean War in chapter one, this section discusses the Volunteer Force’s use of Indian clubs.<sup>113</sup> In 1859 England’s Secretary of State for War, Jonathan Peel, instituted the creation of the Volunteer Force stemming from enlistment shortages and fears of a potential Anglo-French conflict.<sup>114</sup> Numerous middle-class men soon enlisted and despite the fact that many withdrew in subsequent years, the Force was influential in introducing these men to new training regimens.<sup>115</sup> The Force’s training systems mimicked those of the regular forces and thus trained men with drill, club swinging and dumb-bell exercises.<sup>116</sup> This training was not done in isolation, as the proliferation of Volunteer fundraising activities, such as bazaars and fêtes, gave many volunteers the opportunity to showcase their newly acquired training skills to family and friends.<sup>117</sup> Not all men took to this style of training however. In 1860, the *Saturday Review* mean-spiritedly commented,

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>113</sup> For post-Crimea reforms please see Chapter One, Section Three.

<sup>114</sup> ‘The Volunteers now swarming in every part’, *The Times*, 28 May (1859), 8.

<sup>115</sup> Patricia Morton, ‘A military irony: The Victorian volunteer movement’, *The RUSI Journal*, 131:3 (1986), 64-65.

<sup>116</sup> ‘The Liverpool Volunteer Guards’, *Liverpool Mail*, 8 September (1860), 1.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-1885* (London, 1978), 61

There are men capable of persevering in the use of clubs and dumb-bells, and even of making progress in gymnastics... But such men are rare exceptions. And even those who perform their exercises for the prescribed time will go through them in a spiritless and languid fashion...<sup>118</sup>

Matters did not improve with time. In 1862, *Chambers's Journal* published an article mocking the Volunteers' poor club swinging habitus and fitness levels under the title 'Drill under Difficulties'.<sup>119</sup> Despite their criticisms, the articles revealed that thousands were training with Indian clubs during this period, a point touched upon by *Temple Bar* magazine which stated that alongside schools, the Force "possesses the most important elements of physical education for the nation."<sup>120</sup> This physical education introduced thousands to club swinging who might otherwise have avoided it. The growth of club swinging from the 1870s was testament that this experience had lasting effects.

Club swinging's proliferation in English institutions was matched in popular culture where exhibitions and variety shows provided new platforms for exercise. In the first instance, the 1851 Great Exhibition was a seminal moment in introducing Britain's public to a plethora of new ideas, costumes and innovations.<sup>121</sup> While considerable attention has been paid to the Exhibition's commercial elements, the Exhibition was also highly influential in raising awareness about health.<sup>122</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the Exhibition's display of semi-naked Grecian statues both exhilarated and disturbed the public, the statues' sinewy physiques revealed new possibilities about health.<sup>123</sup> For Budd, the statues became reference points for many middle-class men and women from which their bodies were measured.<sup>124</sup> Although more zealous about health than others, Charles Kingsley's assertion that the statues

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<sup>118</sup> 'Physical Education', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 10:262 (1860), 552.

<sup>119</sup> 'Drill under Difficulties', *Chambers' Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 14 June, (1862), 375-379.

<sup>120</sup> 'Muscular Education', *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, 4 December (1861), 47-63.

<sup>121</sup> Jeffrey A. Auerbach, 'Introduction', in Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg (eds.) *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London, 2008), ix-2.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Richards, *The commodity culture of Victorian England: Advertising and spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, 1991). Recent histories such as Geoffrey Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Oxford, 2011) argue for a more holistic understanding of the Exhibition's importance.

<sup>123</sup> Geoffrey Cantor, 'Emotional Reactions to the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20:2 (2015), 242.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire* (New York, 1997), 9-11.

were “precious heirlooms of the human race”, gives credence to Budd’s argument.<sup>125</sup> Similarly the statues proved influential for fitness professionals. Writing a gymnastics manual for a middle-class audience in 1862, Forrest lamented that while,

We English, possess perhaps the finest and strongest figures of all European nations... We... are apparently devoid of that beautiful series of muscles that run round the entire waist, and show to such advantage in the ancient statues.<sup>126</sup>

Aside from body ideals, the Exhibition was noteworthy for displaying a vast array of sporting and medical equipment. While the former was concerned with traditional pursuits such as cricket, the latter proved remarkably innovative.<sup>127</sup> Concerned not only with treatment, the medical equipment focused on preventative measures the public could take to improve their health. This included muscle-building equipment such as pulleys and chest expanders.<sup>128</sup> The approval exhibited by the medical community for muscle-building methods may have given encouragement to those inspired to emulate the Grecian statues’ physiques. Even those without an interest in fitness were exposed to it at the Exhibition, as visitors to the India demonstration were treated to a Hindu athlete’s performance of club swinging, *bethaks* (squats) and *dands* (push-ups).<sup>129</sup> Explicitly and implicitly, the Great Exhibition introduced thousands to new ideas about the body and its maintenance.

Importantly, the Exhibition coincided with an increased interest in variety shows in England amongst all classes.<sup>130</sup> The demand for such entertainment from the 1850s gave numerous strongmen and athletes the opportunity to forge a living, ‘Professor’ Harrison being a good example.<sup>131</sup> Beginning in the 1850s Harrison toured England with his act consisting of club swinging and feats of strength.<sup>132</sup> While strongman shows were commonly associated with working-class music hall shows or the circus, Harrison performed in predominately middle-

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<sup>125</sup> Roberta J. Park, ‘Muscles, symmetry and action: ‘do you measure up?’ defining masculinity in Britain and America from the 1860s to the early 1900s’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24:12 (2007) 1608.

<sup>126</sup> George Forrest, *A Handbook of Gymnastics* (London, 1862), 9-10.

<sup>127</sup> Tony Collins, John Martin, and Wray Vamplew, *Encyclopedia of traditional British rural sports* (London, 2005), 85.

<sup>128</sup> C.D. James, ‘Medicine and the 1851 exhibition’, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 65:8 (1972), 694.

<sup>129</sup> *Official Catalogue Great Exhibition Works Industry All Nations, 1851* (London, 1851), 158.

<sup>130</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, 114.

<sup>131</sup> John Earl, *British Theatres and Music Halls* (Oxford, 2005), 16-30.

<sup>132</sup> ‘The Indian Club Exercise’, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 3 October (1852), 7.

class institutions such as the Volunteer fêtes mentioned earlier or private showings in gymnasiums.<sup>133</sup> Although it is difficult to ascertain how far Harrison's reputation preceded him, there are reasons to believe he was a well-known figure. First, Harrison received a variety of awards for his athleticism, including gifts from the Scottish Society and Queen Victoria.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, in 1855 the widely circulated *Illustrated London News* featured a report on Harrison's strength.<sup>135</sup> The article included the impressive illustration of Harrison, shown below.



Fig 2.5: 'Professor Harrison at the Scottish Fête', *The Illustrated London News*, 14 August (1852), 109 & contemporary photograph of Harrison's club. 'Professor Harrison's Indian Club', Argentus Silver Vault London, Taken by curator on 11 November 2015.

Harrison's muscular physique and his clubs' size were an entirely novel concept for audiences accustomed to fully clad instructors swinging miniscule clubs. Furthermore, the article's assertion that in three years, Harrison progressed from wielding clubs weighing seven-pounds to forty-seven pounds was a story that undoubtedly appealed to a specified middle and aspiring working-class zeitgeist of self-improvement.<sup>136</sup> Interestingly, the above

<sup>133</sup> Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke and Mirrors: Volume One* (Bloomington, 2008), 71; Alan Stuart Radley, *The Illustrated History of Physical Culture: Muscular Ideal v. 1: The Muscular Ideal* (Blackpool, 2001), 32; Brenda Assael, *The circus and Victorian society* (Virginia, 2005), 94. For Harrison's shows see 'Professor Harrison and Bill Cain's Joint Benefit', *The Era*, 20 February (1853), 5. Harrison regularly featured at Volunteer fêtes, Assaults at Arms and various other events. See 'An Assault at Arms', *The Era*, 1 January (1854), 4; 'Early Closing Fête', *Daily News*, 21 September, (1858), 4.

<sup>134</sup> 'The Indian Club Exercise', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 3 October, (1852), 7; 'The Cattle Show', *Bell's Life in London*, 1 December (1861), 3.

<sup>135</sup> By 1855, the *Illustrated London News* was selling 200,000 copies per week. Christopher Hibbert, *The Illustrated London News' Social History of Victorian Britain* (Melbourne, 1978), 11-13.

<sup>136</sup> 'Professor Harrison at the Scottish Fête', *The Illustrated London News*, 14 August (1852), 109. See also

illustration also appeared in the United States. In 1856, *The New York Clipper* used it for an article on Harrison whom it described as “one of the strongest men in the World.”<sup>137</sup>

Similarly when Simon Kehoe, the nineteenth-century’s most successful Indian club manufacturer in North America, penned a book on the subject, he credited Harrison for his interest.<sup>138</sup> Harrison’s popularity inspired others to incorporate club swinging into their routines and it is amusing to find that a litany of ‘Professors’ emerged during the 1860s mimicking Harrison’s show.<sup>139</sup> Both Harrison and his copycats helped introduce club swinging to a much wider Victorian audience that stretched from Blackburn to London.<sup>140</sup> While institutional club swinging was influential in bringing the exercise into the lives of many, it is arguable that recreational pursuits such as the Great Exhibition or variety shows were as important.

As increasing numbers turned towards club swinging in the late 1850s and 1860s, the clubs’ gender associations changed. Regarding masculinity, this was seen in Professor Harrison’s 1865 work *Indian Clubs, Dumb-bells and Sword Exercises*. Unlike previous texts, Harrison’s work was aimed at middle-class men, who “were not masters of their own time” but sought to improve their health and that of their children whose middle-class schools were failing to train them adequately.<sup>141</sup> Harrison’s work promised to transform men and their boys into “new creatures” of strength and muscle.<sup>142</sup> For Harrison however, strength alone was not enough to prove one’s masculine credentials but rather it had to be demonstrated, proven and performed.<sup>143</sup> Accordingly, he told readers that,

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Herbert Schlossberg, *The Silent Revolution and the Making of Victorian England* (Ohio, 2000), 206.

<sup>137</sup> ‘M. Harrison, One of the Strongest Men in the World’, *New York Clipper*, 3 May (1856), 16.

<sup>138</sup> Simon D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise: With Explanatory Figures and Positions: Photographed from Life: Also, General Remarks on Physical Culture: Illustrated with Portraits of Celebrated Athletes, Exhibiting Great Muscular Development from the Club Exercise...* (New York, 1866), 4-5.

<sup>139</sup> One such ‘professor’, Professor Gregory, was particularly prolific and enjoyed moderate successes in the 1860s. See ‘Provincial Theatricals’, *The Era*, 17 August (1862), 4.

<sup>140</sup> ‘The Grand Assault at Arms’, *The Blackburn Standard*, 4 December (1867), 1 and ‘Provincial Theatres’, *The Era*, 17 August (1862), 2.

<sup>141</sup> Professor Harrison, *Indian Clubs, Dumb-bells and Sword Exercises* (London, 1865), 8-13 & 29.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>143</sup> Harrison’s writing on the ideal man is reminiscent of Judith Butler’s famous argument that gender is constantly performed and showcased in a variety of fields. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London, 1990), 145. See also Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London, 2015), 9-11.

Ease and grace must not be neglected; for without these, the Club Exercises win little applause from spectators...Even with inferior strength, he who studies position, upright carriage and elegance of action, will command admiration.<sup>144</sup>

In preaching this message Harrison devoted nearly as much time to the performance element of masculinity as he did on how to become strong. This approach differed greatly from other manuals such as Kehoe's work for American and English audiences, which sought to build health holistically. Another unique element of Harrison's work was its inclusion of scantily clad exercisers at a time when other manuals only tentatively displayed topless men. One such illustration is shown below,

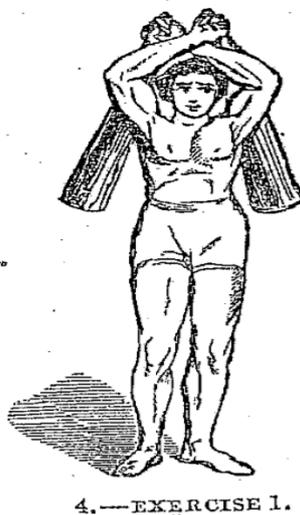


Fig 2.6: 'Exercise 1', Professor Harrison, *Indian Clubs, Dumb-bells and Sword Exercises* (London, 1865), 23.

The impressive physical capital of Harrison's model in both their muscular physique and capacity to wield large clubs can be contrasted with illustrations found in Kehoe's text. Although inspired by Harrison, Kehoe's manual read more like Walker's 1834 work, which sought to help men rebuild a strength lost through overly intellectual work.<sup>145</sup> Featuring topless men, Kehoe's illustrations were remarkably tamer than Harrison's and demonstrate the multiplicity of masculinities at this time.

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<sup>144</sup> Professor Harrison, *Indian Clubs, Dumb-bells and Sword Exercises*, 23-25.

<sup>145</sup> Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise*, 11-13.

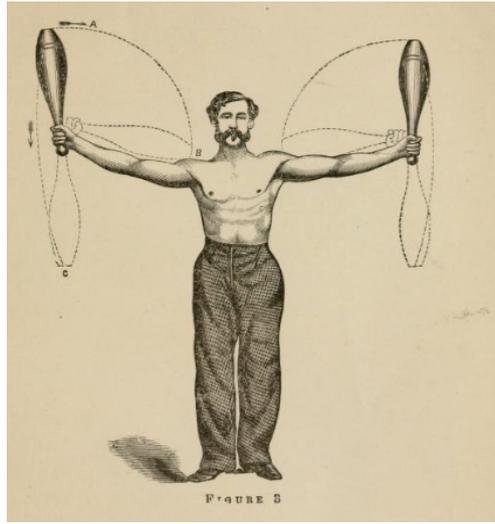


Fig 2.7: 'Figure 8', Simon D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise...* (New York, 1866), 43.

While undoubtedly athletic, Kehoe's model appeared somewhat lacklustre compared to Harrison's, illustrating the men's differing regimens and indeed their thoughts on the ideal male body. Harrison advocated using heavier clubs for extended periods of time, similar to Hindu club swingers' training methods identified in chapter one.<sup>146</sup> This style of training encouraged a physical capital consisting of rounded deltoids, stout quadriceps and peaked biceps, a physique that was in contrast to Kehoe's sinewy athlete who used clubs to develop a fine balance between the mental and physical.<sup>147</sup> Although Kehoe was successfully selling Indian clubs to English consumers at this time, his manual proved less profitable.<sup>148</sup> Harrison's work however went through several editions following its initial publication, a sign that his prescriptions were popular amongst middle-class Englishmen.<sup>149</sup>

If Harrison provided a radically different form of masculinity, the same was true for Dio Lewis and femininity. For Whorton, Lewis's (1862) *The new gymnastics for men, women, and children* attempted to set "off a revolution, a winning of physical independence for women."<sup>150</sup> This 'revolution' was spurred by Lewis's belief that women could match men physically. By avoiding physiological discussions in his manual's opening pages, something Todd identified as a common health trope, Lewis was able to devote his attention solely to

<sup>146</sup> Harrison encouraged club swingers to emulate him by starting with lighter weights and progressively increasing the weight. Professor Harrison, *Indian Clubs, Dumb-bells and Sword Exercises*, 14-15.

<sup>147</sup> Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise*, 11-13.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>149</sup> 'Harrison, Indian Clubs', *British Books, Volumes 15-16* (London, 1898), 13.

<sup>150</sup> James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for fitness: The History of American Health* (Princeton, 1982), 278.

seemingly neutral exercises.<sup>151</sup> In doing so, he was granted space to discuss the variety of ways women and men could undertake similar exercises. The text's preface advertised that Lewis's exercises were "adapted to both sexes", and showcased his belief that women required no differentiated training systems.<sup>152</sup> Where both sexes were encouraged to exercise together, Lewis stressed that although women may initially use lighter weights, within weeks a trained woman was stronger than the average man. Somewhat provocatively, Lewis proclaimed, "no man can enter one of my classes of little girls and go through the exercises."<sup>153</sup> Regarding Indian clubs, exercises for both sexes were indistinguishable and the instructions noticeably absent of suggestions that women would 'damage' themselves by exercising. Furthermore, in discussing his 'pin running' game, shown previously (fig 2.4), Lewis proclaimed that the greatest speeds he had witnessed "had been achieved by women."<sup>154</sup> Lewis's belief in female equality regarding exercise intensified in later years and the 1868 edition of his *New Gymnastics* even included mutual exercises between men and women in which a participant's strength was tested.

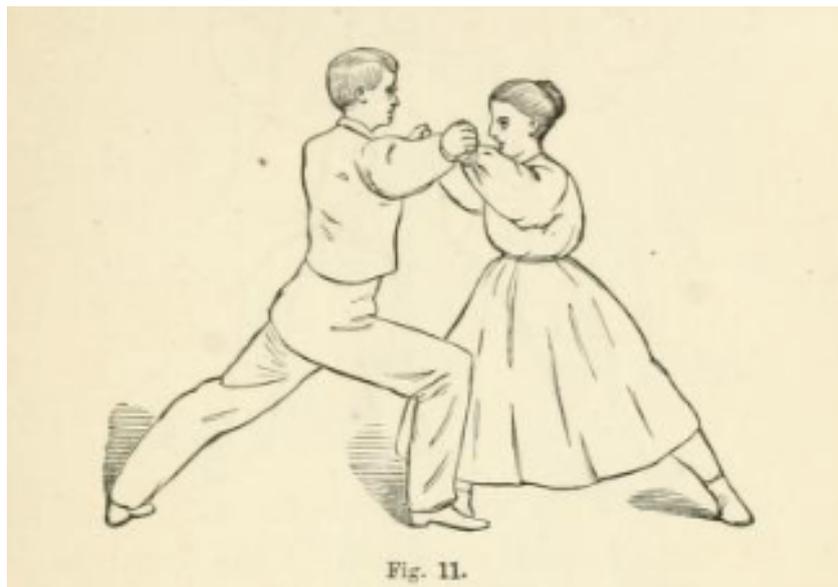


Fig 2.8: 'Mutual Exercises, Figure 11'. Dio Lewis, *The new gymnastics for men, women, and children* (Boston, 1868), 217.

Although Lewis's messages were radical for English audiences, his works were favourably reviewed by many Victorian journals. In 1863 *The National* congratulated Lewis for devising

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<sup>151</sup> Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 241.

<sup>152</sup> Lewis, *The new gymnastics for men, women, and children*, 1.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

an exercise regimen that was holistic and applicable to both sexes.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, *The Reader* praised Lewis's system for producing "elegance" as well as improving "muscular action."<sup>156</sup> That reviewers praised Lewis for designing an exercise system suitable for both sexes indicated that support for his vision existed.<sup>157</sup> Related to this was the incorporation of Lewis's regimens into numerous schools and gymnasia around England.<sup>158</sup> This incorporation was not without its criticisms. In 1866, Spencer mocked Lewis's "parlour gymnastics", arguing they were only fit for children and "delicate persons."<sup>159</sup> *Punch Magazine* was equally scathing about what it termed Lewis's 'Muscular Music' conducted by all-girl schools.<sup>160</sup> Criticisms aside, there is evidence that Englishwomen's experience with this form of exercise was dependent on place. According to McCrone 'calisthenics' curricula based on Lewis's systems often diluted his teachings so that they were significantly more 'gentle' than initially envisioned.<sup>161</sup>

Though Lewis's system was not fully adopted by some schools, the few public gymnasia in existence during this time embraced it wholeheartedly. This was demonstrated with the Liverpool gymnasium's opening in 1865, which equipped its halls with Lewis's recommended devices of dumb-bells and Indian clubs.<sup>162</sup> Within a year of opening, the gymnasium boasted eighty female members from seven hundred and fifty clients. Training on twice-weekly ladies' nights, women were encouraged to perform strenuous exercises as per the Lewis system.<sup>163</sup> This produced "blooming lasses" with "well developed forms" and gave women the opportunity to exercise free from the male gaze.<sup>164</sup> Within three years over a thousand women participated in an athletic demonstration at the Liverpool gymnasium using dumb-bells, Indian clubs and bodyweight gymnastics, thereby demonstrating the successful incorporation of Lewis's ideas regarding female training.<sup>165</sup> Liverpool's example inspired others and by 1868 the Leeds gymnasium was running its own ladies' nights based on Lewis's teachings.<sup>166</sup> Lewis's system may have been diluted in schools but it was dutifully

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<sup>155</sup> 'The Gymnastic Act', *The National*, 14 (1863), 81- 86.

<sup>156</sup> 'Gymnastics and Calisthenics', *The Reader*, September (1864), 380.

<sup>157</sup> See also 'Musical Gymnastics', *The Educational Times*, 18 (1866), 5.

<sup>158</sup> McCrone, 'Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game!', 112.

<sup>159</sup> Charles Spencer, *The Modern Gymnast* (London, 1866), 13.

<sup>160</sup> 'Muscular Music', *Punch Magazine*, 19 November, 58:59 (1870), 211.

<sup>161</sup> McCrone, *Playing the game*, 16.

<sup>162</sup> Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, 136.

<sup>163</sup> 'A Day at the Myrtle Street Gymnasium', *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 December (1865), 6.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> 'Gymnastics by Ladies', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March (1868), 3.

<sup>166</sup> 'The Leeds Gymnasium', *The Leeds Mercury*, 12 December (1868), 7.

followed in gymnasia. Like Harrison, Lewis had presented a new gender ideal with strong ties for the body. This identity, although not fully embraced, did tentatively emerge through some middle-class institutions.

## **Conclusion**

As an exercise tool utilised in England from 1830 to 1870, Indian clubs can be interpreted as a lens for much wider societal issues surrounding fitness and gender. Although the clubs were relatively unchanged during this period, the manner in which people used them differed greatly. For fitness instructors the clubs moulded users into physically improved men or women. For army officials the clubs improved Volunteer's fitness and exposed Englishmen to the varieties of martial training. For doctors the clubs were tools of prevention and treatment, while for schoolteachers the clubs helped achieve a fully rounded education. The new meanings and 'emptied' introduction of Indian clubs in England can be sharply contrasted with another Indian practice, namely, yoga. Practised as a health building exercise in England in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, yoga was rarely divorced from its religious origins, as those who introduced it to English audiences came primarily from spiritual or fitness groups interested in achieving a mind-body holism.<sup>167</sup> Conversely, Indian clubs' association with military and medical professionals meant that the clubs' religious connotations, as discussed in chapter one, never materialized in England. Instead, for the clubs' users, one, or a combination of the distinctly English messages espoused by fitness, army, medical or educational figures likely inspired their motivations to undertake the exercise.

As the clubs became commonplace amongst upper-class users, gender identities specific to England emerged. For Englishmen, Indian clubs built strength, which according to Walker, created bodies easily distinguishable as gentlemanly. That Walker's critics focused on his exercises rather than his assertion that exercise made one manly was particularly telling about contemporary assumptions. Similarly Walker's femininity prescriptions demonstrated that the connection between exercise and identity was not confined to men. Walker's decision to prescribe clubs for men and spectres for women demonstrated that seemingly innocuous material objects operated as social signifiers for gender in Victorian England. Throughout

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<sup>167</sup> Suzanne Newcombe, 'Stretching for health and well-being: Yoga and women in Britain, 1960–1980', *Asian Medicine* 3:1 (2007), 37-38.

their short life, Indian spectres were used by adult women and at times schoolboys but never by male adults. Men exercised solely with Indian clubs.

This gendered division was not confined to the fitness field but emerged also in English medical texts. The conversations between doctors and Walker indicate that the English medical community was not yet a closed profession and it was stemming from doctors' adherence to Walker's works, that medical treatments often buttressed normative gender identities. Although such prescriptions may have reinforced strict gender ideals, they inadvertently introduced numerous clients to begin swinging Indian clubs, which was at times a transformative experience. This experience, long established in the Hindu context, invited users to explore club swinging's tactile elements. Focus paid to the clubs' momentum, one's heartbeat and muscle contractions allowed men and women 'to go off script' and enter an experience free from discourse and identity. This was reflected in the writings of both men and women who used the clubs to briefly 'lose themselves', escape difficult situations or improve their mental health.

In the 1850s institutions played a pivotal role in introducing Indian clubs to a larger audience, specifically England's wider middle-classes. Though a seemingly banal point, it is likely that Indian clubs' practicality was significant in this diffusion. The clubs were relatively cheap, easy to store and did not demand a large amount of space. Furthermore teaching large classes to swing Indian clubs was rarely a difficult endeavour, an element no doubt appreciated by schoolteachers and army officials at this time. It is important to note that schoolchildren and army recruits, both enlisted and voluntary, undertook club swinging in earnest during this period and that the rising interest in club swinging from the 1870s was driven by those who had learned to use the clubs at this time.<sup>168</sup> This illustrates a generational shift in exercise preferences beginning in the 1850s that continued throughout the century. Although promoted primarily by those who encountered Indian clubs through institutions, the clubs' appearance at the 1851 Great Exhibition and in various variety shows was no less important. As more came to train with Indians clubs, newer identities of masculinity and femininity emerged and existed alongside identities constructed during Walker's time. These identities were not just English constructs, as the English publications of American authors such as Kehoe and Lewis demonstrates. The penetration of American texts into England reveals that

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<sup>168</sup> While chapter two focused solely on the Volunteer Force's interactions with Indian clubs, chapter one looks at the training systems for enlisted soldiers across the Empire during this period.

the transnational history of Indian clubs was not confined to India and England, but included the United States. US publications on Professor Harrison indicate that a bilateral transatlantic conversation on fitness was occurring through the Indian clubs.

### Chapter Three: Indian Clubs in England, 1870-1914

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The last quarter of the nineteenth-century saw club swinging emerge as one of the era's recognisable fitness fads, promising a variety of masculine and feminine identities. For men, Indian clubs were said to increase one's strength, employment opportunities and social prestige. Similarly for women, club swinging emerged as not only a tool for health, but also one of social emancipation. The ubiquity of club swinging in English gymnasia and homes from the 1870s can be starkly contrasted with the exercise's fate at the dawn of the twentieth-century. Whereas exercisers in the 1870s swung Indian clubs for health, those in the 1900s were often using the exercise systems of physical culturists. Led by men like Eugen Sandow, the physical culture movement, which emerged in England in the 1890s, became the dominant exercise system of the early twentieth-century for lay exercisers. Promising new physiques and identities through the use of dumbbells, barbells and pulleys, physical culture systems dislodged Indian clubs' popularity amongst English exercisers. Compounding matters for club enthusiasts was the English army's decision to remove club swinging from training practices in the aftermath of the South African War (1899-1902). If 1870 to 1900 signalled the height of Indian clubs' popularity, the succeeding decade signalled its decline. In 1914 Indian clubs briefly returned to public attention however when it was revealed that the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was using Indian clubs as weapons in their clashes with policemen, thereby demonstrating the clubs' martial capabilities.

Although Indian clubs faded from popular culture during this period, their late nineteenth and early twentieth-century story encapsulates broader developments in English society regarding exercise trends, martial training and the campaign for women's suffrage. Illustrating this, section one discusses the clubs' multiplicity from 1870 to 1900 with reference to the variety of embodied gender identities attached to the practice. Section two examines physical culture's rise alongside the re-emerge of concerns about troop health to explore why Indian clubs fell out of favour both publically and privately from 1900 onwards. The chapter concludes by examining the WSPU's relationship with physical culture and what prompted the group to use Indian clubs in their altercations with policemen.

## I

### All-inclusive clubs: Club swinging from 1870 to 1900

The 1870s saw club swinging attain a much higher profile thanks to the proliferation of English gymnasia catering to both sexes.<sup>1</sup> Although numerous gymnasia existed in England during this time, London emerged as the nation's 'centre of fitness', with the London German Gymnasium the benchmark from which others drew inspiration.<sup>2</sup> This gymnasium welcomed thousands of attendees from both sexes, as articles in illustrated newspapers such as *The Graphic* and *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* attest.<sup>3</sup> In 1875 *The Graphic* depicted the various exercises undertaken by male clientele, including club swinging.

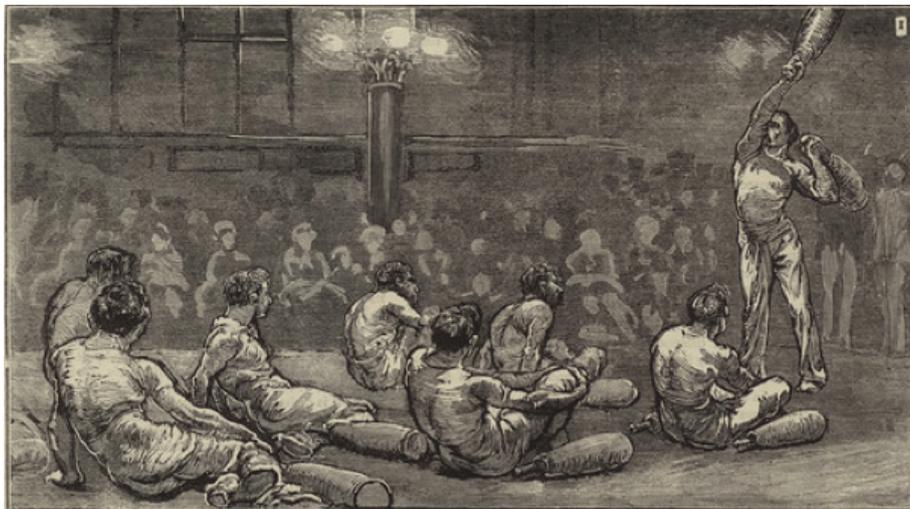


Fig 3.1: 'Jottings at a Display of the German Gymnastic Society', *The Graphic*, 20 February (1875), 11-13.

The drawing elucidates the clubs' role in performing masculinity alongside the importance of habitus, in this case proficiency with Indian clubs, as a social signifier. Regarding the former, the athlete performed not only for his fellow exercisers but also for an assembled public. That he was comfortable with this gaze was implicitly demonstrated in his reportedly flawless performance.<sup>4</sup> That the athlete's club swinging warranted a solo performance demonstrates

<sup>1</sup> Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire* (New York, 1997), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Polley, *The British Olympics: Britain's Olympic Heritage 1612-2012* (Swindon, 2013), 67.

<sup>3</sup> For the importance of these publications see Rob Steen, *Sports Journalism: a Multimedia Primer* (London, 2014), 24; Andrew King and John Plunkett, *Popular Print Media, 1820-1900. Vol. 3.* (London, 2004), 487-490.

<sup>4</sup> 'Jottings at a Display of the German Gymnastic Society', *The Graphic*, 20 February (1875), 11-13. This reiterates a point made in chapter one whereby under Bourdieusian logic putting one's body on display

that club swinging helped divide exercisers based on their club swinging proficiency.<sup>5</sup> Seven other men are shown, each presumably capable of some degree of competency, yet instead of performing they must politely watch. In her work on manners, Hemphill stressed the importance of politeness in reinforcing power relations.<sup>6</sup> Sitting on the floor, staring upwards, the men implicitly appear subservient to the performer, later identified as their squad leader.<sup>7</sup> Bodily movements with the clubs thus created hierarchical divisions amongst male exercisers. The following year, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*'s article on female athletes demonstrated that such issues were not exclusive to men.

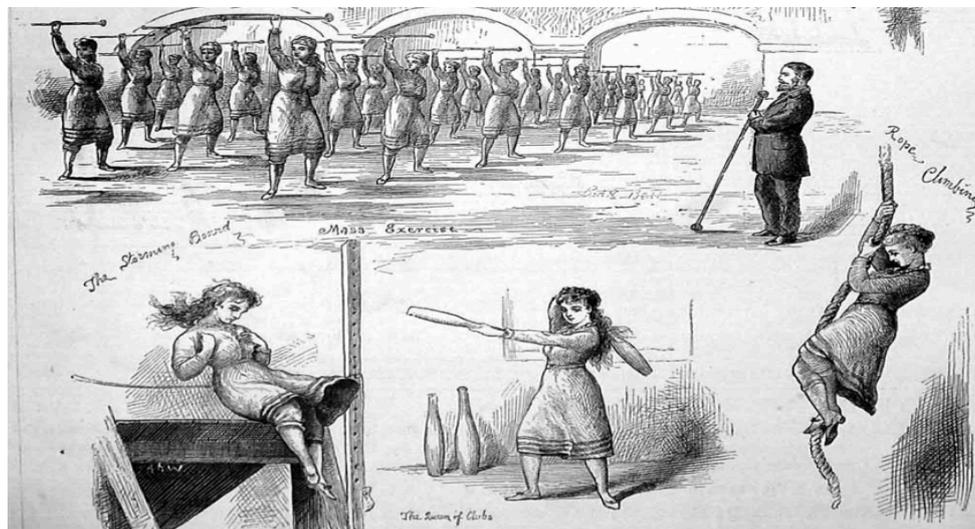


Fig 3.2: 'The Ladies Class at the German Gymnasium', *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 1876, 9 December (1876), 252.

For female athletes, it was common to train with Indian spectres before graduating onto club swinging, a rite of passage imbued with social kudos.<sup>8</sup> Note that those using spectres in the illustration's background train under a male instructor, while the woman swinging Indian clubs is training with relative independence. Once more club swinging was used to separate exercisers from one another.

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presupposes a contented awareness of the image that is projected to others. Pierre Bourdieu, 'The peasant and his body', *Ethnography* 5:4 (2004), 585.

<sup>5</sup> Steph Lawler, 'Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power and Resistance', *The Sociological Review*, 52: s2 (2004), 112.

<sup>6</sup> C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to necessities: A history of manners in America, 1620-1860* (Oxford, 2002), 7-11.

<sup>7</sup> 'Jottings at a Display of the German Gymnastic Society', *The Graphic*, 11-13.

<sup>8</sup> A. Alexander, *Modern Gymnastic Exercises: Part One Elementary* (London, ca. 1888), 75- 81.

While the illustrations depicted implicit ways of distinguishing oneself, the creation of club swinging competitions explicitly divided people based on their club swinging skill. Beginning in 1876 with the Leeds Gymnasium, several competitions emerged to decide the “King of the Clubs”, both regionally and nationally.<sup>9</sup> That club swinging, formally a health building exercise, became competitive was representative of broader English sporting trends, which sought to formalise competitions and determine sporting elites.<sup>10</sup> Although Indian clubs were incorporated into Amateur Athletic Association events, the lack of a formal club swinging association did little to stifle their popularity.<sup>11</sup> The 1880s and 1890s would see competitions proliferate across Britain, despite the difficulties this caused for travelling athletes. In 1896, the Leeds Athletic Team travelled 300 miles to compete in a one-day tournament in Aberdeen, a journey undertaken by several other English teams.<sup>12</sup> Such competitions were not confined to men as the 1890s witnessed the birth of similar contests for women.<sup>13</sup> Though club competitions were segregated by gender, the equipment used was arguably egalitarian. Both sexes used clubs weighing between two and three-pounds, a remarkable occurrence given that many physicians and fitness instructors stressed the need for men to use heavier weights than women.<sup>14</sup>

Club swinging’s importance was not limited to athletics, as increasing numbers of classrooms were introduced to Indian clubs from the 1870s. This was due to the 1870 Elementary Education Act, which made education compulsory for many schoolchildren aged 5 to 13. Primarily aimed at working-class children, discussions surrounding the Act included long debates about working-class children’s physical and mental health. According to Hargreaves, military drill (which included club swinging) became the *de rigueur* form of physical education in many working-class schools to improve health and discipline.<sup>15</sup> Indeed in 1900, *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture* featured a short article praising Miss Adolphsen for teaching club swinging to working-class girls, regardless of its challenges,

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Leeds Athletic Club’, *Leeds Mercury*, 8 March (1876), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London, 2004), 97.

<sup>11</sup> Peter McIntosh, *Sport in Society* (London, 1971), 63.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Indian Clubs’, *The Aberdeen Journal*, 9 March (1896), 6.

<sup>13</sup> See ‘Musical Drill’, *The Northampton Mercury*, 20 March (1891), 8; ‘Musical Drill Competition’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 28 April (1895), 5.

<sup>14</sup> E. Ferdinand Lemaire, *Indian Clubs and How to Use Them* (London, 1889), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women’s Sport* (London, 2002), 68. Working-class during this period is broadly understood as those “skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled workers who were paid a daily or weekly wage.” J.F.C. Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875 - 1901* (London, 1990), 67.

When she started – with twelve pupils – she found her task no easy one. The girls had not the slightest idea of discipline and looked upon an Indian club as a missile specially put into their hands by Providence to be heaved at someone else’s head.<sup>16</sup>

Such experiences were regularly recounted in club manuals, such as McCarthy’s work, which noted that while beneficial, teaching club swinging to working-class children was incredibly testing.<sup>17</sup> Although working-class adults and children were using Indian clubs during this time, owing to the clubs’ inclusion in martial and educational training systems, there is little evidence that Indian clubs became a popular form of recreational exercise for the working-class.<sup>18</sup> Those working-class exercisers drawn to purposeful exercise instead seemed far more likely to train with barbells and dumbbells as opposed Indian clubs.<sup>19</sup> The stern manner in which Indian clubs were institutionally introduced to working-class exercisers perhaps influenced the low level of interest in the clubs. Another significant change in education during this period was the proliferation of girls’ schools with tailored P.E. curricula.<sup>20</sup> Introducing thousands of middle-class girls to new sporting pursuits, McCrone argued that such exercise programmes were, in a sense, emancipatory.<sup>21</sup> These programmes often included club swinging owing to the fact that many P.E. teachers were former army officials.<sup>22</sup> While the nineteenth-century’s closing years saw female P.E. teachers gain a stronghold in the profession, training systems often still included Indian clubs, thus demonstrating the clubs’ perceived educational importance.<sup>23</sup>

Indian clubs’ prominence in the public sphere brought with it new identities for middle-class men and women. Regarding men, 1870 to 1900 saw distinct and somewhat opposing identities emerge in training manuals, targeting both lay and serious exercisers. For general male exercisers, clubs helped build what Holt identified as ‘the amateur body’, inspired by

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<sup>16</sup> Philip Whitwell, ‘The Cult of the Body’, in *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture*, Vol. IV: January to June (London, 1900), 50-55.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas A. McCarthy, *An easy system of physical exercises and drill: including light dumb-bell, wand, Indian club and leaning exercises* (London, 1894), 6-8.

<sup>18</sup> For army training systems see chapter one, section two. Similarly chapter two, section two.

<sup>19</sup> David L. Chapman, *Sandow the magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the beginnings of bodybuilding* (Illinois, 1994), 101.

<sup>20</sup> June Arianna Kennard, *Woman, Sport and Society in Victorian England* (Unpublished Ed.D. in Physical Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1974), 83.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen E. McCrone, ‘Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game! Sport at the Late Victorian Girls’ Public School’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 23:2 (1984), 121.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, ‘Edgbaston High School for Girls’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 July (1891), 3.

<sup>23</sup> There is a rich body of literature on the growth of female education instructors, as taught by Madame Osterberg. Sheila Fletcher, *Women first: the female tradition in English physical education, 1880-1980* (Athlone, 1984), 20-25 provides a good introduction to the topic.

neo-classical norms that was “neither too tall nor too small, too thin nor too fat.”<sup>24</sup> In manuals, this body became associated with “the battle of life”, thereby resembling Walker’s 1834 masculine prescriptions, which argued that strength was societally advantageous.<sup>25</sup> For Maclaren both the “devoted bookworm and devoted athlete” were at risk of weakness and hence, unpreparedness in the battle of life.<sup>26</sup> Similarly for Mordon, weakness threatened one’s employment.<sup>27</sup> The connection between health and employment was a relatively new emergence in manuals, no doubt informed by a crude sense of Social Darwinism regarding competition.<sup>28</sup> This was highlighted in Almond’s plea in 1884 that just ten minutes daily exercise with Indian clubs would give workers an advantage over colleagues.<sup>29</sup> Despite such bold rhetoric, training methods remained relatively unchanged as evidenced by Captain Crawley’s 1880 statement that there was little to be added to the subject of club swinging.<sup>30</sup> While training methods remained static, physical depictions in manuals did not as evidenced by Lemaire’s 1889 work, which displayed the coveted ‘amateur’ body,

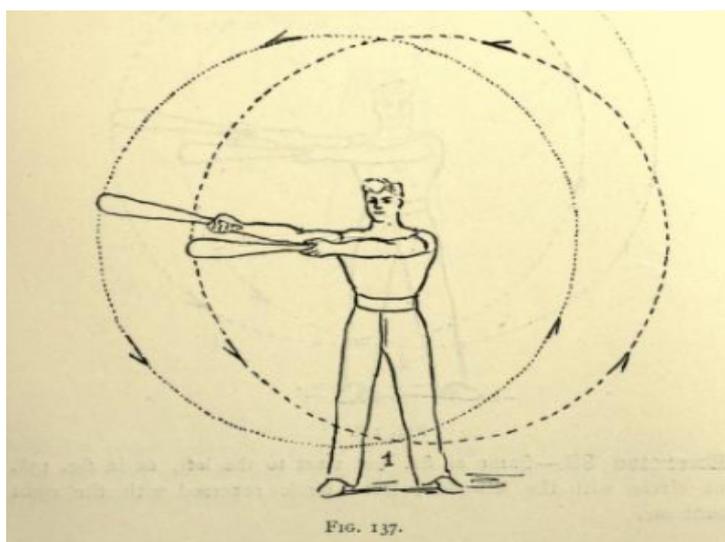


Fig 3.3: E. Ferdinand Lemaire, *Indian Clubs and How to Use Them* (London, 1889), 107.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Holt, ‘The Amateur Body and the Middle-class Man: Work, Health and Style in Victorian Britain’, *Sport in History*, 26:3 (2006), 361.

<sup>25</sup> Archibald Maclaren, *A system of physical education, theoretical and practical* (London, 1885), 25. For more on Walker see chapter two, section two.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> W.E. Mordon, *A new handbook on training for athletic exercises: including aquatics, swimming, pedestrianism, dumb-bells, Indian-clubs, cycling, running, etc., etc* (London, 1887), 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> See Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 44; Mike Huggins, ‘Prologue – setting the scene, second-class citizens? English middle-class culture and sport, 1850-1919 – a reconsideration’, in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *A sport-loving society: Victorian and Edwardian middle-class England at play* (London, 2004), 23.

<sup>29</sup> H.H. Almond, ‘The Difficulties of Health Reformers: Part Two’, in Edinburgh Health Society (Eds.), *Health Lectures for the People* (Edinburgh, 1884), 173.

<sup>30</sup> Captain Crawley, *Popular gymnastics, athletics, pedestrianism, dumb bells, bar bells, Indian clubs, calisthenics, boxing and wrestling, training* (London, 1880), ix.

This ‘amateur body’ possessed a broad chest, wide shoulders and strong arms, a look that many, both domestically and internationally, saw as quintessentially English.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, amateur bodies, as forged by club swinging, brought with them a certain social gravitas as evidenced by a late Victorian joke,

What club do you belong to, Smith?

Don’t belong to any, but two clubs belong to me – Indian Clubs.

Smith should be made to swing for that.<sup>32</sup>

That we expect Smith to respond about his affiliation to a gentleman’s club or similar is the root of the joke, a moment of ‘knowingness’ whereby humour is derived from a deviation from expected responses.<sup>33</sup> Smith’s unexpected response playfully demonstrated Indian clubs’ importance to a man’s social identity.

As lay athletes took to club swinging, others used clubs to build more muscular physiques, a trend undoubtedly influenced by Professor Harrison’s 1865 work on the subject, which argued for muscle as a cornerstone of masculinity.<sup>34</sup> Returning to Lemaire’s work, we find that while the first half of his text catered towards the ‘amateur’ body, the second centred on building a muscular and specified masculinity, a body capable of producing numerous “feats of strength” and eliciting admiration.<sup>35</sup> The bodily differences between the ‘amateur’ and muscular body were echoed in the exercises listed. For amateur bodies, exercises were gentle and designed for short workouts, while those seeking muscular bodies engaged in more strenuous work.<sup>36</sup> Lemaire’s claim that muscular men were comparable to the Farnese Hercules implied that such bodies had a more raw and powerful masculinity than others.<sup>37</sup> Alexander’s 1890 writing on heavy clubs illustrated this Farnese ideal,

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<sup>31</sup> See for example, ‘Rational and Irrational Athletics’, *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 20 May (1871), 315. Kate C. Hurd, ‘Physical culture as taught abroad: The gymnasia of England and the Continent. Swedish gymnastics’, *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 122:25 (1890), 602-605.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Wit and Humour’, *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, and Yorkshire*, 11 June (1881), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Bailey, ‘Conspiracies of Meaning: Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture’, *Past & Present*, 144 (1994), 138.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter two, section three.

<sup>35</sup> Lemaire, *Indian Clubs and How to Use Them*, 191.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, X & 82.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

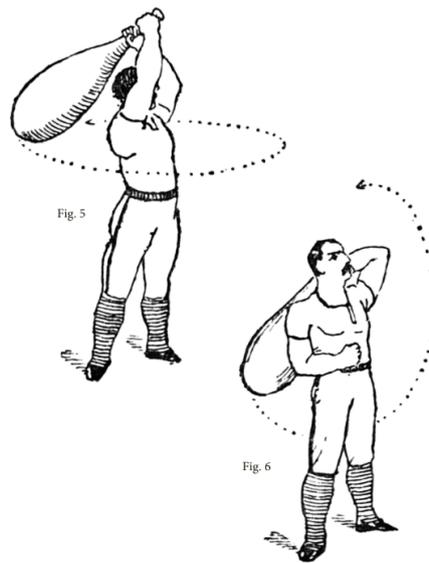


Fig 3.4: Alexander Alexander, *Modern Gymnastic Exercises (Advanced)* (London, 1890), 191.

While the above body type was desirable for some, for others it represented gross overdevelopment. Writing in 1892, Holbrook cautioned against “excessive use of the clubs, to which some enthusiasts are inclined”, as it developed abnormal growth in the biceps and pectorals.<sup>38</sup> Although the muscular bodies produced by heavy club swinging were in opposition to amateur bodies, another identity emerged during this time, which combined elements of the two. As the name suggests, endurance club swingers were those athletes capable of swinging clubs for hours without rest. For men, endurance swingers were presented as a hybrid between amateur and muscular bodies. Tom Burrows, pictured below, is a particularly good example.

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<sup>38</sup> M. L. Holbrook, *The Hygienic Treatment of Consumption and Consumptive Tendencies* (London, 1892), 60-61.



Fig 3.5: Tom Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging* (London, 1909), 57.

From 1890, Burrows toured the world competing in endurance swinging competitions with some remarkable results. In 1893 he achieved six hours swinging without rest and by 1897 he could swing Indian clubs for forty consecutive hours.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, Burrows was not alone in his enthusiasm, as reports from 1900 indicate the emergence of endurance swinging competitions across Britain.<sup>40</sup> Different from the exercise systems discussed, endurance swinging produced a smoother muscle development, similar to the ‘amateur’ body, with differences between such bodies stemming from the endurance swinger’s assumed mental strength. While ‘amateur’ bodies exercised to remain healthy, endurance athletes were depicted as testing the limits of human will.<sup>41</sup> Addressing those questioning his endeavours, Burrows wrote defiantly,

Where is the use of it? You may ask. Well where then is the use of any sort of athletic record? I think I may claim to have first established a real searching inquiry into the capacity of the human frame to endure a long-drawn out continuous spell of exertion.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Tom Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging* (London, 1909), 13-14.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Washington, ‘The Evolution of Indian Club Swinging: A Chat with Mr. George Cobbett’, in *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture*, Vol. IV: January to June (London, 1900), 43.

<sup>41</sup> See, Almond, ‘The Difficulties of Health Reformers’, 173 for more on the amateur athlete.

<sup>42</sup> Tom Burrows, *The Text-Book of Club Swinging* (London, 1900 ed.), 14.

Burrows's endurance feats produced a body desirable by amateur athletes but associated it with the mental strength and fortitude linked to the muscular Farnese-esque club swinger.

The association between club swinging and embodied gender identities was similar for female exercisers, something evidenced by 'Women free at last', a novel published in 1900. An acclamation for Englishwomen, the novel placed a strong emphasis on physical training, as evidenced by the protagonist's cry,

Ever since the commencement of the world woman has been the slave of domineering men, but *thanks to dumb-bells and Indian clubs* [emphasis added], the time has at last arrived when she can assert herself.<sup>43</sup>

The clubs' elevated status was representative of growing female engagement with the clubs to improve health, gain employment and participate in competition. Yet remarkably, given the novel's boisterousness, certain discourses regarding the clubs and women continued to focus on supposedly frail bodies. Such theories were continually posited during the nineteenth-century, with comparisons between 1830s and 1880s training manuals revealing only small modifications to ideas about women's inherent frailty. Whereas previously writings focused on adults, late nineteenth-century texts focused primarily on schoolgirls.<sup>44</sup> In 1881, *Cassell's Household Guide* argued that schoolgirls' current inactivity was leading to deformities, deformities that could be cured with Indian clubs.<sup>45</sup> The message that "hopelessness and inactivity are no longer looked upon as feminine virtues" revealed that new identities for middle-class children were under construction.<sup>46</sup> From then onward, many schools incorporated club swinging for female students based on assumptions about improving their health.<sup>47</sup> Club swinging was so highly regarded for independent schools such as the Central Newcastle High School for Girls that Indian clubs were a feature in the annual class photographs.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Magazine Morsels', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 8 December (1900), 11

<sup>44</sup> See Donald Walker, *Exercises for Ladies* (London, 1836), XV; A. Alexander, *Healthful exercises for girls* (London, 1884), 40-50.

<sup>45</sup> 'Calisthenics for Ladies', *Cassell's Household Guide*, 1 (1881), 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 & 231.

<sup>47</sup> See for example, 'Edgbaston High School for Girls', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 July (1891), 6.



Fig 3.6: 'Central Newcastle High School for Girls 1891', Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum, Newcastle.

The clubs' inclusion in the centre foreground of the photograph indicates how important exercise had become for schools, and the idea that growing generations needed exercise quickly became a common trope in training manuals. Writing in 1884, Alexander argued that clubs were necessary to improve schoolgirl's poor posture, attention and overall health.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Lemaire's manual promoted club swinging for girls who may otherwise neglect physical activity.<sup>49</sup>

While the depiction of schoolgirls in such manuals were often negative, in that they assumed a default frailty, they nevertheless introduced girls to numerous exercises and laid the foundations for female P.E. instructors' emergence in schools. Prompted primarily by concerns about schoolgirls' health, the late 1870s witnessed numerous Englishwomen undertaking professional training to become P.E. instructors. Although women had been running private callisthenic classes using Indian clubs as early as 1830, the 1880s saw greater numbers of middle-class women establishing privately run club-swinging classes.<sup>50</sup> Such classes' popularity influenced English school teaching, which although generally favouring those trained in the bodyweight Swedish system of Ling gymnastics, also employed those utilising club swinging. Miss Adolphsen's experience with working-class girls a case in

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<sup>48</sup> Alexander, *Healthful Exercises for Girls*, 43-50.

<sup>49</sup> Lemaire, *Indian Clubs and How to Use Them*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Two, Section Two for more. 'Dancing and Callisthenics', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 3 January (1890), 4; 'Dancing, Department and Callisthenics', *York Herald*, 2 January (1890), 1.

point.<sup>51</sup> The appearance of female instructors in public and private classrooms marked an important change in teaching policies, which had formerly relied upon retired army officials to conduct P.E. in schools.<sup>52</sup> Teaching club swinging, both publically and privately, afforded middle-class women the opportunity to develop previously unavailable professional identities.

The emergence of female instructors' was undoubtedly influenced by a contemporaneous proliferation of female athletes. As noted by historians, the period 1870 to 1900 saw scores of Englishwomen participate across a range of sporting activities.<sup>53</sup> Regarding Indian clubs, the 1890s saw a series of competitions emerge in English gymnasiums to determine champion female athletes.<sup>54</sup> Whereas previously club swinging was confined to the home or on ladies' nights in the gymnasium, club swinging competitions gave women the opportunity to compete and display their athleticism with Indian clubs.<sup>55</sup> By 1900 numerous women were competing and receiving praise for their achievements.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, women's competitive success elevated their standing in gymnasia, as demonstrated by *Health and Strength's* (1901) sketching of London's Woolwich Gymnasium, which depicted a female club swinger alongside the caption, "the ladies play a prominent part".<sup>57</sup>



Fig 3.7: 'Sketches at the Woolwich Polytech Gymnasium', *Health and Strength*, 2: 10 (1901), 13.

<sup>51</sup> Fletcher, *Women first*, 23-27; Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 68; Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1990), 119.

<sup>52</sup> Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Kathleen E. McCrone, *Playing the Game: Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914* (London, 1988), 1-20 provides a good introduction.

<sup>54</sup> See for example, 'Musical Drill Competition', *Llyod's Weekly Newspaper*, 28 April (1895), 5.

<sup>55</sup> See 'Gymnastics by Ladies', *The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer*, 23 April (1892), 7.

<sup>56</sup> Washington, 'The Evolution of Indian Club Swinging', 43.

<sup>57</sup> 'Sketches at the Woolwich Polytech Gymnasium', *Health and Strength*, 2:10 (1901), 13.

It is interesting to note that the larger sketching from which this illustration was taken featured numerous male athletes. The female exerciser shown above was the only female figure not depicted as a spectator, thus demonstrating the importance attached to such athletes. By 1900 women could use Indian clubs to establish themselves professionally, to maintain their health or to compete. Few other physical activities offered such possibilities, perhaps explaining why *Women Free At Last* regarded the clubs so highly.

## II

### **From Sandow to South Africa: The Fall of Indian Club Swinging in England**

Although Indian clubs' popularity at the end of the nineteenth-century bode well for the exercise, domestic and international trends soon saw their popularity wane. This was influenced by physical culture's rise in England and the British army's relative failure in the South African War (1899-1902). Declining interest in Indian clubs was evident to club practitioners, who from 1900 onwards, attempted to revive the clubs' status through a range of practices. Evaluating Indian clubs' declining popularity from 1900 to 1914, this section will examine physical culture's rise in England and, in doing so, pay particular attention to Eugen Sandow, whom many credit as the movement's ideological figurehead. Following this, club swinging's decline in martial exercise systems will be discussed with reference to the South African War and changes in army physical training. The section concludes by examining how club practitioners attempted to mitigate against the clubs' decline and why such attempts ultimately failed.

Spearheaded by Eugen Sandow, the physical culture movement, which emerged in the 1890s, was England's most popular training system by 1914. Advocating a system of dumbbells, barbells and pulleys, the movement dramatically impacted Indian clubs' popularity. That Miller could write in 1908 "physical culture ... hardly needs a formal introduction. Already 'the man in the street' has a nodding acquaintance with it", demonstrated physical culture's rise in English society.<sup>58</sup> This rise stemmed in part from the movement's use of photography and moralistic messages. Regarding the former, from 1900, several physical culturists supplemented their incomes through provocative photographs produced for the purpose of

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<sup>58</sup> J.J. Miller, *Physical Culture* (London, 1908), 1.

displaying physical culture's potential.<sup>59</sup> While numerous physical culturists posed for photographs, those of Eugen Sandow, a Prussian born showman shown below, proved the most popular.<sup>60</sup>



Fig 3.8: Eugen Sandow, *Strength and how to Obtain It* (London, 1897), 117.

For Morais, Sandow's physical capital, consisting of defined, enlarged muscles provided new ideas about men's bodies.<sup>61</sup> These ideas contrasted with nineteenth-century club manuals, which argued that men could be muscular or sinewy, but not both. Sandow bridged this barrier, thereby placing his teachings in a privileged position. Such images also utilised Sandow's sexual appeal and provided him with two distinct market bases, the first comprised of exercisers, and the second comprised of admirers.<sup>62</sup> Though stressing his allegiance to the former, Sandow's photographs were arguably aimed at the latter, allowing him to profit from hetero and homosexual desires.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Deborah Bright, *The passionate camera: photography and bodies of desire*. (London, 1998), 48.

<sup>60</sup> Chapman, *Sandow the magnificent*, 19-21.

<sup>61</sup> Dominic G. Morais, "Branding Iron: Eugen Sandow's "Modern" Marketing Strategies, 1887-1925", *Journal of Sport History*, 40:2 (2013), 196.

<sup>62</sup> Chapman, *Sandow the magnificent*, 76-86, discusses this to an extent.

<sup>63</sup> Bengry examined the double-faceted marketing campaign of a later male magazine in this regard. Justin Bengry, 'Courting the pink pound: Men Only and the queer consumer, 1935-39', *History Workshop Journal*, 68:1 (2009), 122-148.

Remarkably given physical culturists' borderline pornographic images, they preached a staunchly moral message.<sup>64</sup> In 1905 Sandow depicted himself as "preach[ing] the 'gospel of health and strength.'<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in 1907, he dedicated a chapter to the "Moral Effect of Exercise."<sup>66</sup> The idea that fitness equated with moral living appeared regularly in training manuals and, as late as 1937, physical culturist George Hackenschmidt discussed exercise's role in returning to the "life power."<sup>67</sup> Although moral messages appeared in nineteenth-century club manuals, physical culture gave them a much greater weighting and extended the messages to both sexes. Indeed, Zweiniger-Bargielowska has highlighted physical culturists' extensive efforts to incorporate new ideas of English womanhood, which encouraged much greater strength than before.<sup>68</sup> Such messages were presented in a nationalist framework, seeking to build muscle for the British Empire.

The combined message of health, morality and nationalism perhaps explains the institutional acceptance of physical culture amongst army officials, doctors and academics. Regarding the military, by the late 1890s, Sandow had developed a friendship with Lieutenant-General Fox, the man responsible for troop training.<sup>69</sup> A strong admirer of Sandow, Fox even sought to implement Sandow's system into army training. While the army eventually chose not to employ Sandow's systems, the Commander-in-Chief did.<sup>70</sup> Both Edward VII and George V retained Sandow as a personal trainer, with the latter titling Sandow the 'Professor of Scientific and Physical Culture to his Majesty.'<sup>71</sup> Similarly, several well-known doctors echoed the respect for Sandow's system, claiming to either use the system themselves or prescribe it to patients.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the greatest praise for Sandow came from the Natural

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<sup>64</sup> Dominic Erdozain, *The problem of pleasure: sport, recreation and the crisis of Victorian religion* (Woodbridge, 2010) 1-40, demonstrates how the secular moralistic messages of the early 1900s had their roots in church teachings advocating sport in the nineteenth-century.

<sup>65</sup> Eugen Sandow, *Strength and How to Obtain It* (London, 1905, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), B, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Eugen Sandow, *The Construction and Reconstruction of the Human Body: A Manual of the Therapeutics of Exercise* (London, 1907), 25.

<sup>67</sup> George Hackenschmidt, *Fitness and Your Self* (London, 1937), 63.

<sup>68</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the body: beauty, health, and fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 2010), 112-115.

<sup>69</sup> Eugen Sandow, *Sandow on Physical Training* (London, 1894), vii.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 55; David Waller, *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugen Sandow, Victorian Strongman* (London, 2011), 207.

<sup>71</sup> Warren Greene, *A Child of Three Fathers: Physical Culture and the Birth of the Modern Fitness Magazine* (Unpublished American Studies MA Thesis, Lehigh University, 2003), 45; David Webster, 'The European Corner: A Chronology of Significant Events in the Life of Eugen Sandow', *Iron Game History*, 2:4 (1992), 18.

<sup>72</sup> See 'Sandow's Greatest Invention', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 7 April (1900), 3; 'The English Medical World...', *The Medical Times*, 39 (1911), 250.

History Museum in London, which in 1902, commissioned a life-size statue of Sandow's body, as evidence of the 'perfect' European male form.<sup>73</sup>



Fig 3.9: 'Eugen Sandow Statue 1902', Natural History Museum London. Photograph taken from Natural History Museum [<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/blogs/behind-the-scenes/tags/statue>].

Although the statue was later withdrawn following disapproval of its nakedness, it demonstrated physical culture's multifaceted popularity.<sup>74</sup> Such popularity, both within fitness fields and wider society, had a profound impact upon club swinging. While club enthusiasts continued the practice of club swinging well into the 1930s, the more lay exerciser, of whom there were thousands, turned away from Indian clubs towards physical culture studios to build Sandow-esque physiques or, in the case of women, stronger bodies.<sup>75</sup>

Lay disinterest in club swinging was echoed in the martial field, which sought new training methods in the aftermath of the South African War (1899-1902). Beginning in 1899 with the Boer invasion of Natal, the South African War was a seminal moment in British history, as over 450,000 were called from across the Empire to fight in South Africa.<sup>76</sup> Remarkably given the sheer volume of English troops, South African fighters proved a formidable foe. Through a series of successful guerrilla campaigns, the South Africans managed to prolong the conflict for several months before a ceasefire was called in 1902.<sup>77</sup> Britain's failure to deal with a seemingly lesser opponent unsurprisingly caused great concern, with Kipling

<sup>73</sup> Waller, *The Perfect Man*, 177.

<sup>74</sup> 'Eugen Sandow', *London Municipal Notes* 5 (1907), 465.

<sup>75</sup> Patrick Scott, 'George Douglas Brown, 'The South African War, and Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 41:1 (2008), 78-94.

<sup>76</sup> Kenneth O'Morgan, 'The Boer War and the media (1899-1902)', *Twentieth Century British History*, 13:1 (2002), 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> A seminal work on this topic continues to be Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979).

lamenting “the imperial lesson” being given as early as 1901.<sup>78</sup> Similarly the Duke of York implored England’s public to ‘wake up’ to their physical decline.<sup>79</sup> Fears of decline prompted fierce debates about troop and working-class men’s health in England and led to a number of government enquires into the matter. The enquiry’s results seemed to confirm the Duke of York’s fears. In 1904, An Inter-Departmental Report on Physical Deterioration revealed that nearly half of all men examined, many of whom were working-class, were unfit for service.<sup>80</sup> For Lowerson these findings contributed to an atmosphere of gloom about England’s supposed weak state.<sup>81</sup>

Both during and after the conflict, army officials began scrutinising training methods. In 1900 Major Mayne’s article in *The United Services Magazine* used the war to illustrate the deficiencies in current training regimens.<sup>82</sup> Similarly in 1901 an anonymous article argued that the war revealed “many weaknesses in our system of training.”<sup>83</sup> Whereas prior to the war Lieutenant-General Fox unsuccessfully attempted to implement new bodyweight training systems into army training, societal and military demand for improved fitness in the War’s aftermath allowed new exercise regimens to be trialled.<sup>84</sup> Additionally in 1905 the War Office brought the Inspector of Gymnasia under its direct control, thereby formalising troop training.<sup>85</sup> Whereas previously the Royal Army Physical Training Corps (RAPTC) existed as a semi-independent body, War Office control led to an increased scrutiny of its methods.<sup>86</sup> Soon after, Danish Lieutenant Lankilde was invited to Aldershot, the RAPTC’s home, to trial the Ling bodyweight exercise system.<sup>87</sup> While Lankilde’s visit was experimental, Campbell argued that Army officials quickly embraced the system.<sup>88</sup> During Lankilde’s sojourn, the RAPTC gymnasium was converted to accommodate the Ling system, which relied solely on

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<sup>78</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Five Nations* (London, 1903), 120.

<sup>79</sup> Geoffrey Searle, ‘National Efficiency and the Lessons’ of the War’, in David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson (eds.), *The Impact of the South African War* (London, 2002), 194.

<sup>80</sup> Sir Almeric William Fitz Roy, *Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration: Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty. VI, Report and Appendix. Vol. 1.* (London, 1904), 21.

<sup>81</sup> John Lowerson, *Sport and the English middle classes, 1870-1914* (Manchester, 1995), 278-280.

<sup>82</sup> Major C.B. Muyne, ‘The Training of Infantry for the Attack’, *The United Services Magazine*, 20 (1899-1900), 278.

<sup>83</sup> ‘A Staff Corps Captain...Modern Military Training’, *The United Services Magazine*, 23 (1901), 404-407.

<sup>84</sup> E.A.L Oldfield, *History of the Army Physical Training Corps* (Aldershot, 1955), 13; David Webster and Doug Gillon, *Barbells and Beefcake: Illustrated History of Bodybuilding* (New York, 1979), 31.

<sup>85</sup> James D. Campbell, *The Army Isn’t All Work’: Physical Culture in the Evolution of the British Army, 1860-1920* (Burlington, 2012), 63.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Captain F.J. Starr, *War History of the British Army Gymnastic Staff* (Army Physical Training Corps Museum File # 1664, unpublished manuscript), 1.

<sup>88</sup> Campbell, *The Army Isn’t All Work’*, 63.

bodyweight exercises and thereby relegated the clubs' importance. In 1908 the army's first official physical training manual explicitly adopted the Ling System.<sup>89</sup> Indian clubs dropped out of use and were soon considered as a nuisance to training, something evidenced by the 1914 training manual,

If the soldier is trained on the principles herein inculcated [the Ling System], there will be no necessity whatever for the employment of additional weights such as dumb-bells, rifles etc. and during the period of recruit training, their use as auxiliaries to this training is more likely to do harm than good.<sup>90</sup>

In one decade Indian clubs went from being a cornerstone of army training to an unnamed piece of equipment "likely to do more harm than good." The only concession reserved for Indian clubs in 1914 was their use as props in troop relay races.<sup>91</sup> In a half decade, Indian clubs went from a vital part of troop training to a mere toy.

Having discussed the declining use of Indian clubs from the early 1900s, attention will now be turned to club practitioners' failure to retain interest in the practice, a failure that primarily stemmed from club swingers' efforts to position Indian clubs against physical culture. For example, in 1905 Sergeant Moss argued that while Sandow possessed an impressive body, replicating his training would not reproduce it. Club swinging was therefore more desirable as it would replicate a certain body type.<sup>92</sup> Similarly Burrows positioned Indian clubs against weightlifting systems.<sup>93</sup> Given that such exercise systems were incredibly popular, Burrows's decision to castigate weightlifting was curious, as was his claim,

Indian clubs over all other appliances endow their users not only with an all-round muscular development, but with a stimulating action on all the involuntary muscle... thereby practically ensuring freedom from illness, and consequently the perfection of health.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>90</sup> *Manual of Physical Training (Reprint 1908 with Amendments published in Army Orders to 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1914)* (London 1914), 187.

<sup>91</sup> General Staff, *Physical Training* (London, 1918), 48.

<sup>92</sup> Alfred Moss, *Simple Indian Club Exercises* (London, 1905), 3.

<sup>93</sup> Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging*, 19-20.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 65.

By positioning clubs against ‘all other appliances’ Burrows missed the opportunity to incorporate Indian clubs into physical culture systems, which often exhibited indiscriminate acceptance of equipment.<sup>95</sup> While Sandow’s system used bodyweight exercises, dumb-bells and pulleys, Burrows attempted to present club swinging as an all-encompassing system.<sup>96</sup> This was highly problematic in a fitness field saturated with workout paraphernalia; something alluded to by *Health and Strength*’s 1903 cartoon depicting the confusion surrounding contemporary exercise systems,

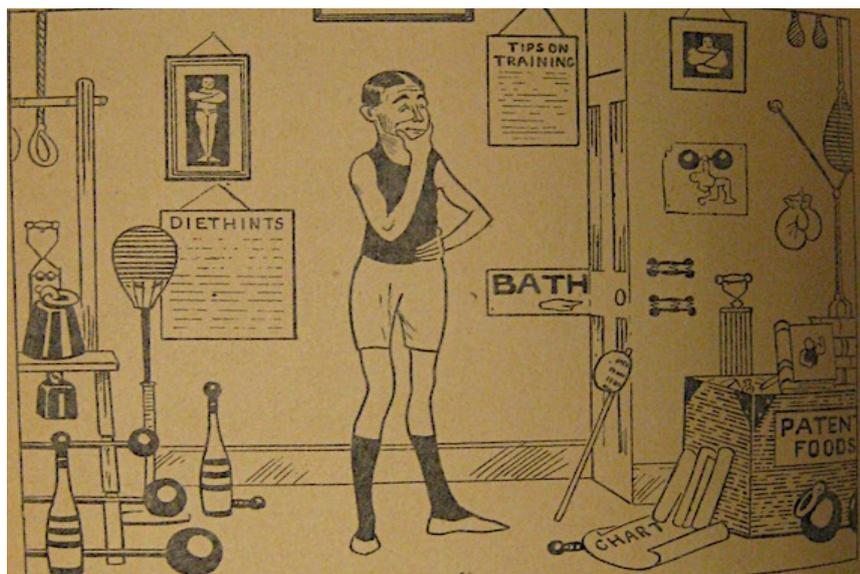


Fig 3.10: ‘Query: When and How to Commence?’, *Health and Strength*, 6:10 (1903), 346

Aside from positioning Indian clubs against other systems, club swingers’ language concerning body image became increasingly antiquated. Although not all Englishmen sought the ‘Sandow ideal’, it is undeniable that the Sandow body was highly prized.<sup>97</sup> Thus Steel’s 1908 assertion that Indian clubs were the only exercise “where slender men have an advantage over their better developed physical culture friends” seemed misguided.<sup>98</sup> By noting the ‘better developed’ physical culturists, Steel implicitly suggested that Indian clubs could not produce such bodies and inadvertently raised questions about the clubs’ utility. If there were better means of developing the body, what use were Indian clubs? The same year as Steel’s comments, a newspaper article on Tom Burrows revealed the now perceived lacklustre body produced by club swinging,

<sup>95</sup> Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke and Mirrors, Volume One* (Bloomington, 2008), 18-30.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>97</sup> For alternative body types see Paul R. Deslandes, ‘The Male Body, Beauty and Aesthetics in Modern British Culture’, *History Compass*, 8:10 (2010), 1191-1208.

<sup>98</sup> Adam Steel, ‘Double Club Swinging’, *Health and Strength*, 26 September (1908), 308–09.

Tom Burrows is... of medium height, strongly built and squarely set, a nugget athlete. Burrows at first glance does not give the impression that he is possessed of any remarkable degree of physical energy.<sup>99</sup>

Such comments contrasted with descriptions of Sandow, often credited as possessing the ‘perfect’ physique.<sup>100</sup> If an elite athlete like Burrows did not seem possessed “of any remarkable degree of physical energy”, what hope was there for laymen? Moss addressed this issue when he revealed that misconceptions about Indian clubs’ benefits turned many toward physical culture systems.<sup>101</sup> Women, too, turned away from Indian clubs, perhaps owing to their absence in training manuals. From the early 1900s, club manuals written by Burrows, Moss, Cobbett and Hill were aimed almost exclusively at male exercisers, with sparse references to females.<sup>102</sup> This was particularly striking in Burrows’s manual, which, although noting that female teachers incorporated club swinging into their curricula, dedicated two solitary pages to the topic.<sup>103</sup> At a time when women were increasingly urged to weightlift, club manuals remained silent. Even those women producing club manuals did so with relatively anachronistic messages. Stempel’s 1905 work stated that women’s clubs should weigh no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds, six years after Sandow famously admonished English doctor Arabella Kenealy for prescribing likewise.<sup>104</sup>

Antiqued ideas about the body for both male and female exercisers in training manuals undoubtedly impacted the clubs’ popularity. Similarly important was the failure to innovate public spectacles featuring Indian clubs. Whereas physical culturists showcased numerous feats of athleticism, club swingers continued with traditional competitions despite opportunities for new ventures.<sup>105</sup> Such opportunities included the 1904 St. Louis Olympics,

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<sup>99</sup> ‘A Chat with Tom Burrows’, *Star*, 23 May (1908), 4.

<sup>100</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural spectacles of the extraordinary body* (New York, 1996), 358.

<sup>101</sup> Moss, *Simple Indian Club Exercises*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging*; Moss, *Simple Indian Club Exercises*; G. T. B. Cobbett and Austin Fleming Jenkin, *Indian Clubs* (London, 1905); Gus Hill and Tom Burrows, *Club Swinging* (New York, 1913).

<sup>103</sup> Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging*, 77-78.

<sup>104</sup> Therese D. Stempel, *Physical exercises for girls: comprising plain, fancy, and step marching; free movements; and exercises in dumb-bells, wands, Indian clubs, and calisthenic rings* (London, 1905), 63; Eugen Sandow, ‘The Physical Development of Women’, in *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture*, Vol. III: July to December (London, 1899), 99-104.

<sup>105</sup> As Broderick D.V. Chow recently argued, “physical culture was a form of theatre”. ‘A Professional Body: Remembering, repeating and working out masculinities in fin-de-siècle physical culture’, *Performance Research*, 20:5 (2015), 30-41.

which included a club-swinging event unattended by English athletes.<sup>106</sup> Burrows's absence in 1904 was particularly puzzling as he regularly travelled to North America to compete in club swinging events.<sup>107</sup> Given that British weightlifting's status was enhanced following successes at the 1896 Olympics, it is arguable that this absence denied club swingers the opportunity to add a new prestige to the exercise.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the transition from ten-minute competitions towards endurance competitions from 1900 proved equally problematic. Such events saw competitors swing clubs for days on end, accompanied by musicians in the hope of providing entertainment. Unfortunately such displays often proved tedious for English audiences and were regularly lambasted.<sup>109</sup> Criticisms were evident in discussions of Burrows's 1913 event, which saw him swing clubs for 107-hours without rest. Undeniably a feat of athleticism, Burrows's performance was marred by its finale, which saw a half-dazed Burrows strike a non-commissioned officer before falling into a 28-hour slumber.<sup>110</sup> Demonstrating considerable *schadenfreude*, one reporter opined that it was a display of remarkable idiocy.<sup>111</sup> Others, perhaps more concerned, implored Burrows to desist from such performances.<sup>112</sup> By 1914 Indian clubs were fast becoming obsolete.

### III

#### **“Charges Girls”: Suffragists and Indian Clubs**

Despite Indian clubs' declining popularity, their disappearance from popular culture was not yet a *fait accompli*. In early 1914 Indian clubs returned as a topic of national interest, albeit for unexpected reasons. Whereas nineteenth-century discussions focused on the clubs' health benefits, conversations in 1914 were more likely to revolve around their martial use. This referred to the Women's Social and Political Union's (WSPU) use of Indian clubs as weapons in their altercations with English policemen.

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<sup>106</sup> James Sullivan, *Spalding's Official Athletic Almanac for 1905, Special Olympic Number: Containing the Official Report of the Olympic Games of 1904* (New York, 1904), 245; Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan, *The 1908 Olympic Games: results for all competitors in all events, with commentary, Vol. 5.* (Jefferson, 2000), 25; Martin Polley, 'No business of ours?: the Foreign Office and the Olympic Games, 1896–1914', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 13:2 (1996), 96-106.

<sup>107</sup> Tom Burrows, *The Textbook of Club Swinging*, 14-15.

<sup>108</sup> Bonini Gherardo, 'London: The Cradle of Modern Weightlifting', *The Sports Historian*, 21:1 (2001), 56-70.

<sup>109</sup> Graeme Kent, *The Strongest Men on Earth: When the Muscle Men Ruled Show Business* (London, 2012), 69.

<sup>110</sup> 'After Breaking World's Record, Tom Burrows Sleeps for 28 Hours', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 April (1913), 2.

<sup>111</sup> 'Magazines', *Lichfield Mercury*, 25 April (1913), 8.

<sup>112</sup> 'Sporting Paragraphs', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 21 April (1913), 8.

Although English groups seeking female emancipation dated to the 1860s, the WSPU did not emerge until 1903. Formed in reaction to the perceived failures of the Independent Labour Party and National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the WSPU initially campaigned through peaceful means, a tactic that quickly changed.<sup>113</sup> According to Emmeline Pankhurst, a WSPU founding member, the turning point came in 1905 following a House of Commons filibuster on a Women's Enfranchisement Bill.<sup>114</sup> Shortly after the Bill's defeat, two WSPU members interrupted a Liberal election meeting, unveiling a banner proclaiming, "votes for women" and asked whether the Liberal government supported female suffrage.<sup>115</sup> Though relatively peaceful, many condemned the action as radical.<sup>116</sup> The following year, the *Daily Mail* coined the derogatory term 'suffragette', as opposed to suffragist, to distinguish WSPU members from less controversial suffragist organisations.<sup>117</sup> By then, the WSPU were increasingly engaging in public tactics aimed at disrupting and harassing politicians in the fight to secure emancipation, with some problematic results.<sup>118</sup> In 1907, several WSPU members formed the Women's Freedom League (WFL), in protest to the WSPU's authoritarian governance and campaigning.<sup>119</sup> Similarly problematic was the WSPU's decision to engage in more radical protests, which increased tensions with police.<sup>120</sup> Considered as criminal acts, such actions resulted in the incarceration of several suffragists, some of whom undertook hunger strikes in protest.<sup>121</sup> For Mayhall, the WSPU's actions were influenced by the group's conviction that by denying female suffrage, the English government were acting tyrannically.<sup>122</sup> This was reflected in Christabel Pankhurst's 1908 statement that "those who are outside the Constitution have no ordinary means of securing admission; and therefore they must try extraordinary means."<sup>123</sup> From 1908 the WSPU

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<sup>113</sup> Maroula Joannou, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: new feminist perspectives* (Manchester, 1998), 157; Eric Evans, *The Shaping of Modern Britain: Identity, Industry and Empire 1780-1914* (London, 2014), 407; June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton, 'Introduction: the Campaign for Votes for Women', in June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women* (London, 2000), 3.

<sup>114</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London, 1914), 38-41.

<sup>115</sup> Paula Bartley, *Emmeline Pankhurst* (London, 2002), 78.

<sup>116</sup> Jill Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census* (Oxford, 2014), 26.

<sup>117</sup> Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (London, 2014), 55.

<sup>118</sup> Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The militant suffrage movement: citizenship and resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford, 2003), 111.

<sup>119</sup> Jalna Hanmer, Jill Radford, and Elizabeth Stanko, *Women, Policing, and Male Violence* (London, 1989), 18.

<sup>120</sup> Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford, 1997), 162.

<sup>121</sup> Patricia L. Moran, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Virginia, 1996), 30

<sup>122</sup> Mayhall, *The militant suffrage movement*, 15.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

attempted to increase public pressure on the Liberal government through political protest, judicial challenges and media campaigns.<sup>124</sup>

It was the WSPU's militant tactics that led to confrontations with police. For example, in 1910 a WSPU protest against a failed suffrage bill resulted in physical clashes with police and the assault and arrest of several protestors.<sup>125</sup> The incident, later dubbed as 'Black Friday', brought the Liberal government considerable embarrassment, as published photographs of suffragists lying prostrate on the ground brought the conflict's reality to wider audiences.<sup>126</sup> Although not immediately apparent, the confrontation was a foreshadowing of future violence between the WSPU and police.<sup>127</sup> Unlike 'Black Friday' when policemen had the upper hand, later clashes were less one-sided thanks to the WSPU's decision to incorporate self-defence classes into their modus operandi. Such classes, taught by jiu-jitsu instructor Edith Garrud, were in direct response to the physicality of previous clashes and demonstrated how the WSPU used physical culture to advance its aims.

In 1902 Eugen Sandow stated that if suffragists sought to improve woman's societal status, they would be better served encouraging women to exercise instead of political agitation.<sup>128</sup> Written somewhat indifferently, Sandow's awareness of physical culture's potential for suffragists is nevertheless fascinating. Unfortunately, as Williams noted, historians have neglected crosscurrents between English physical culture and suffragists.<sup>129</sup> This neglect is reflective of a broader historiographical approach, which has only recently assessed the relationship between sport and suffragists beyond that of protesting events or destroying playing fields.<sup>130</sup> Despite early suffragist biographies, which commented that there was no time for recreations until the vote was won, many suffragists engaged in various forms of physical culture, especially jiu-jitsu.<sup>131</sup> Initially viewed suspiciously by Victorian audiences, jujutsu as it was termed, gained a number of English proponents in the early twentieth-

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<sup>124</sup> John Mercer, 'Media and Militancy: propaganda in the Women's Social and Political Union's campaign', *Women's History Review*, 14:3&4, (2005), 471; Mayhall, *The militant suffrage movement*, 74-78

<sup>125</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton, 1987), 173.

<sup>126</sup> Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928*, 50.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Rosen, *Rise up, women!: the Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1914* (London, 2013), 232.

<sup>128</sup> Eugen Sandow, *The Gospel of Strength According to Sandow* (Melbourne, 1902), 27.

<sup>129</sup> Jean Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One: Sporting Women, 1850-1960* (London, 2014), 84.

<sup>130</sup> Joyce Kay, 'It wasn't just Emily Davison! Sport, suffrage and society in Edwardian Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25:10 (2008), 1338-1354.

<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: a reference guide, 1866-1928* (London, 2000), xi.

century including Edward Barton-Wright, Arthur Conan Doyle and his famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.<sup>132</sup> Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1905) substantially increased jujutsu's popularity in England amongst both sexes.<sup>133</sup> This resulted in a number of proficient female instructors emerging, such as Phoebe Roberts, who taught jujutsu in London and Emily Watts, who became the first female English author on the subject.<sup>134</sup> While Roberts and Watts did not become involved in suffragist movements, another female instructor, Edith Garrud, did.

Trained by Sadakazu Uyenishi in the late 1890s, Garrud established her own London dojo in 1903 with her husband, William.<sup>135</sup> Five years later, Garrud joined the WFL while also lending her services to the WSPU. In 1909 she exhibited her jujutsu abilities at a WSPU 'Women's Exhibition' in London and was "inundated with signatures afterwards."<sup>136</sup> Soon Garrud was teaching a self-defence class to WSPU members, resulting in her becoming a person of considerable media interest. In 1909, *Health and Strength* reported on Garrud's classes with the inflammatory title 'The New Terror of the Police'.<sup>137</sup> Sensationalism aside, Garrud was keen to stress women's fighting capabilities. Writing in *Votes for Women* in 1910 she opined that because women were weaker than men, they needed jujutsu to make physical altercations equitable.<sup>138</sup> Eager to prove that her jujutsu skills matched her writings, Garrud often engaged in public demonstrations. In 1910 *The London Daily Mail* reported that Garrud tossed a policeman overhead after he expressed his incredulity that such a feat was possible.<sup>139</sup> Although his partner defeated Garrud in a similar test of strength, the Newspaper was steadfast in its assertion that "the London police force may well shake in their shoes at the prospect of what the future may hold."<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, Garrud was ambiguous about jujutsu's potential. Writing in *Health and Strength* Garrud claimed jujutsu was being taught to protect women from "the attack of a ruffian" and not "the man in blue."<sup>141</sup> In 1911 Garrud produced a small suffragist play entitled 'Ju-Jutsu as a Husband Tamer', which re-iterated

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<sup>132</sup> Hashimoto Yorimitsu, 'Soft Power of the Soft Art: Jiu-jitsu in the British Empire of the Early 20th Century', *International Research Center for Japanese Studies*, 38 (2011), 69-74.

<sup>133</sup> Emelyne Godfrey, *Femininity, Crime and Self-defence in Victorian Literature and Society: From Dagger-fans to Suffragettes* (Basingstoke, 2012), 74-78.

<sup>134</sup> Joseph R. Svinth, *Martial arts in the modern world* (Santa Barbara, 2003), 66.

<sup>135</sup> Diana Looser, 'Radical Bodies and Dangerous Ladies: Martial Arts and Women's Performance, 1900-1918', *Theatre Research International*, 36:1 (2011), 9.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> 'The New Terror of the Police', *Health and Strength*, 24 April (1909), 421.

<sup>138</sup> Edith Garrud, 'The World We Live In: Self-Defence', *Votes for Women*, 4 March, (1910), 3.

<sup>139</sup> 'Suffragettes and Policemen: Amazons in the Making', *The London Daily Mail*, 25 August (1910), 1.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Edith Garrud, 'Damsel v. Desperado', *Health & Strength*, 23 July, (1910), 101-102.

jujutsu's importance for domestic, as opposed to political, protection. Again *Health and Strength* was used as a media platform, with the 8 April edition running a small pictorial article on the play.



Fig 3.11: 'Ju-Jutsu as a Husband-Tamer: A Suffragette Play with a Moral', *Health and Strength*, 8 April (1911), 339.

The stills depicted Garrud's student Ms. Quinn flipping a man overhead, displaying both the successful application of Garrud's teachings and jujutsu's potential.<sup>142</sup> Regardless of Garrud's non-partisan public persona, her private life displayed her politicised allegiances. From 1911 to 1913 Garrud's dojo was often used to hide WSPU members wanted by police for arson.<sup>143</sup> Although there is little to suggest Garrud was involved in such campaigns, her training and safeguarding of members greatly aided the WSPU. Garrud's training was utilised even further in 1913 when a decision was made to escalate WSPU efforts.

The intensification of WSPU protests in 1913 coincided with the passing of the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act, or 'Cat and Mouse Act'. The Act, a direct response by the Liberal Government to hunger striking suffragists, allowed the release of prisoners who were close to malnourishment on condition they would be re-arrested once recovered.<sup>144</sup> Faced with public discontent over force-feeding hunger strikers, the government rushed the Act through Parliament in the hope of improving their reputation and nullifying the

<sup>142</sup> 'Ju-Jutsu as a Husband-Tamer: A Suffragette Play with a Moral', *Health and Strength*, 8 April (1911), 339.

<sup>143</sup> Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London, 1973), 167.

<sup>144</sup> Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp, "The Transfiguring Sword": *The Just War of the Women's Social and Political Union* (Alabama, 2015), 80.

strikers.<sup>145</sup> The Act soon proved cumbersome however as suffragists temporarily free from prison regularly evaded arrest thanks to the WSPU bodyguard, which hid and defended them. This new WSPU wing had its roots in Garrud's self-defence classes and the organisations' militant campaigns. It was the latter that prompted Sylvia Pankhurst to implore suffragists in late 1913 to

Go out with your sticks [Indian clubs]. What is the use of demonstrating for freedom and going unarmed? Don't come to meetings without sticks in future, men and women alike. It is worthwhile really striking. It is no use pretending. We have got to fight.<sup>146</sup>

Within months of Pankhurst's rallying call, a 25-member bodyguard was established under Garrud's tutelage and Gertrude Harding's command.<sup>147</sup> In early 1914 the bodyguard came to public attention following clashes with police at an Emmeline Pankhurst speech in Chelsea. Pankhurst was wanted after fleeing to North America following her temporary release from prison under the 'Cat and Mouse' Act and her Chelsea speech was one of her first public appearances following her return to England in 1914.<sup>148</sup> When police attempted to arrest Pankhurst, the bodyguard sprang into action, revealing their previously hidden Indian clubs and attacked, some allegedly yelling 'charge girls'.<sup>149</sup> One month later, the bodyguard emerged for 'The Battle of Glasgow' in St. Andrew's Hall. Once again police attempting to arrest Pankhurst were met with a wall of resistance from WSPU members carrying Indian clubs, batons and a revolver loaded with blanks.<sup>150</sup> This time, despite the bodyguard's efforts, Pankhurst was arrested and taken for questioning.<sup>151</sup> A *Daily Record* pictorial on the bodyguard's weapons revealed the violent nature of their defence tactics

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 79-82.

<sup>146</sup> 'Suffragist Militancy: Miss Sylvia Pankhurst's Advice', *The Times*, 20 August (1913), 8.

<sup>147</sup> Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, 212.

<sup>148</sup> June Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst* (London, 2002), 208-246.

<sup>149</sup> 'Suffragette War Cry: Assaults with Indian Clubs', *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 February (1914), 4; 'Suffragettes – Charge Girls', *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 23 February (1914), 6.

<sup>150</sup> Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 340-342.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

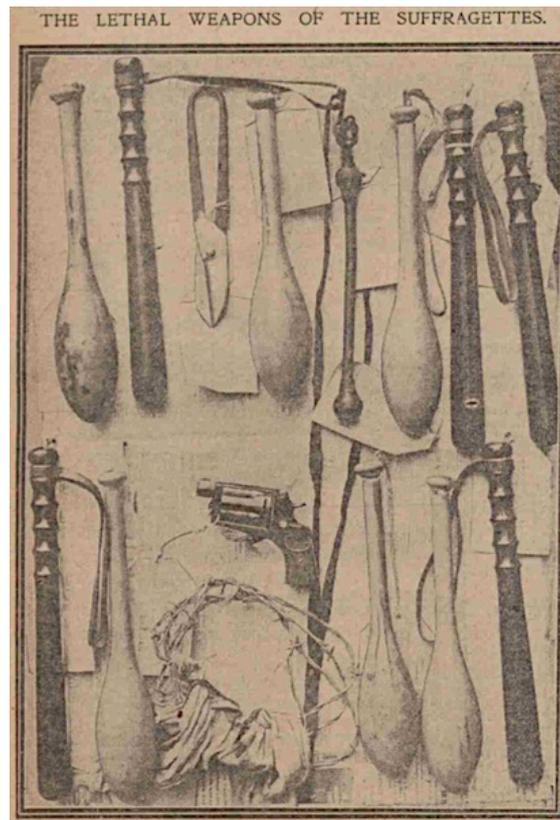


Fig 3.12: ‘The Lethal Weapons of the Suffragettes’, *Daily Record*, 14 March (1914), 8.

A final brawl between the bodyguard and police occurred in May 1914 when a WSPU delegation attempted to speak with King George V at Buckingham Palace. Intercepted by policemen, a melee erupted between the bodyguard, wielding Indian clubs, and police.<sup>152</sup> The fighting ended once more with the arrest of Pankhurst and several bodyguard members.<sup>153</sup> Somewhat mercifully for policemen, when the Great War erupted in August 1914, the WSPU set aside their fight for emancipation to support the war effort, thereby calling a close on the bodyguard’s short lifespan.<sup>154</sup>

The WSPU use of Indian clubs revealed many of the trends previously discussed. The bodyguard wielded Indian clubs due to women’s familiarity with them and also the ease in which they could be concealed. Women’s familiarity with Indian clubs was an unintended consequence of several decades of fitness literature, which had encouraged women to undertake club swinging. Likewise the ease of concealing the clubs was a consequence of the British army’s decision to shorten Indian clubs from their traditional form. Had the

<sup>152</sup> ‘Suffragettes and the King’, *Western Daily Press*, 22 May (1914), 6.

<sup>153</sup> Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 349.

<sup>154</sup> Angela K. Smith, ‘The Pankhursts and the War: Suffrage magazines and First World War Propaganda’, *Women’s History Review*, 12:1 (2003), 103-105.

bodyguard used traditional Hindu clubs, which weighed over seventy-pounds, police would have encountered an altogether different threat. Nevertheless, the bodyguard's use demonstrated how women used Indian clubs to challenge societal ideas about women, thereby transforming the clubs into political tools. While the Hindu physical culture movement exercised with Indian clubs to challenge gender ideas, the WSPU's use of the clubs was no less important, albeit significantly more violent.

## **Conclusion**

From 1870 to 1900 Indian clubs were one of the most recognisable exercise regimens in England, appearing in countless classrooms, homes and gymnasia. This popularity brought with it a plethora of ideas about the type of bodies and identities that could be forged through using them. For men, club swinging could produce neo-classical bodies, fit for business, while at the same time produce muscular physiques for Farnese-esque strongmen. The messages and expected behaviours of such men differed, yet their training tool was the same. Additionally the emergence of the endurance exerciser as a sort of hybrid identity combined the neo-classical body with the mental strength of the muscular. This variety of identities demonstrated how Indian clubs were used to reinforce, reinvent and reinvigorate ideas about Englishmen and their bodies.

For women, Indian clubs held an equally varied meaning. For those of school going age, the clubs built robust bodies, thereby challenging previous ideas that femininity was inactive and frail. Although such discourses were embedded with eugenic ideals about the future of the English race, they nevertheless attempted to bring about some form of exercise equality, resulting in the implementation of club swinging into the P.E. curricula of multiple schools. For those for whom school was but a distant memory, Indian clubs were equally valuable. Beginning in the 1880s, numerous women found employment owing to their proficiency with Indian clubs. While this had occurred in the 1830s, by the 1880s more women could achieve relative financial independence thanks to their public or private employment as club swinging instructors. In this way, club swinging and physical activity encouraged a form of female emancipation, as Fletcher famously argued in 1984.<sup>155</sup> Often overlooked historically, the emergence of female club swinging competitions also challenged ideas about English

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<sup>155</sup> Fletcher, *Women first*, 1-20.

womanhood. Whereas other athletic endeavours were often highly prescriptive about female participation, club-swinging competitions encouraged female competitors to showcase their abilities without fear of ridicule or scorn. That men and women competing in such events used the same equipment, in both weight and size, was remarkably egalitarian.

The fitness field was however, an inherently unstable place, something Indian club practitioners witnessed in the early 1900s when the emerging physical culture movement instigated a declining interest in Indian clubs. Preaching a moralistic message of Empire and regeneration, physical culturists tapped into a specified English zeitgeist that was increasingly concerned with the body. Similarly physical culturists' photographs and marketing successes saw laypersons and professionals swoon over the muscles of men like Eugen Sandow. That the Natural History Museum commissioned a statue of Sandow's body for posterity revealed the extent to which physical culture had penetrated several levels of English society. As a result, from the early 1900s, thousands of Englishmen and women abandoned Indian clubs and flocked to physical culture training studios. The willingness of English lay society to embrace physical culture was mirrored in the martial field, which in the South African War's aftermath experienced a moment of self-reflection. The war had starkly highlighted English troops' physical unpreparedness and brought about demands for efficient training systems. It is somewhat ironic that the openness of English officers to foreign training systems, which first led to Indian clubs' incorporation into the martial field, was also responsible for their downfall. The decision in 1906 to remove Indian clubs from troop training systems in favour of Ling gymnastics signalled a sea change in army training policies, once more brought about by a shaky performance in battle. By the eve of the Great War, one gets the sense that Indian clubs were relics waiting decommissioning as opposed to valued training tools. That training manuals written in 1914 suggested Indian clubs could do more harm than good was testament to their decline.

Aware that their beloved pastime's popularity was waning, Indian club practitioners ruefully attempted to position the exercise against, rather than within, physical culture systems. A decision that appears to have been misplaced. Rather than claim club swinging built Sandowesque physiques, which traditional Hindu practices supported, practitioners instead reiterated out-dated ideas about the shape of male and female bodies. That club swinging manuals from this period neglected to mention the growing number of women teaching club swinging, or that women could train with heavy clubs, placed Indian clubs at a disadvantage to physical

culture systems. Similarly inabilities to innovate the spectacle of club swinging contributed to the clubs' downfall. This included the failure to send British representatives to the 1904 Olympics and the decision to engage in endurance swinging events, which proved increasingly unpopular. While the media praised Burrows for his endurance feats in 1897, they ridiculed him in 1914.

Surprisingly, as Indian clubs were vanishing from gymnasia, they experienced a fleeting notoriety in 1914 thanks to the WSPU. Beginning in 1905 and continuing until August 1914, the WSPU proved itself a considerable thorn in the side of England's police and Government owing to numerous acts of civil disobedience, which often resulted in clashes with police. The brutality of such clashes eventually encouraged the WSPU to undertake jujutsu classes under the watchful eye of Edith Garrud. While historians have not yet fully examined physical culture's importance for suffragists, it was undeniable that physical culture was an integral part of the WSPU's strategy. Jujutsu classes levelled the physical playing field between sexes, and gave WSPU members confidence in their physicality. Similarly Garrud used physical culture magazines such as *Health and Strength* to publicise her WSPU training.

Physical culture and the fight for female suffrage was no trivial matter and the incorporation of Indian clubs into the WSPU bodyguard's repertoire demonstrated as much. The use of Indian clubs as weapons in clashes with police reflected both the intensity of the fight for suffrage and the clubs' malleability. The WSPU appropriation of Indian clubs once more 'emptied' the clubs of their social and cultural capital and replaced them with new martial and political meanings. The bodyguard's jujutsu training and club wielding therefore demonstrates that exercise can be, and often is, a vital component in minority's fights for greater freedoms. In India, the Hindu physical culture movement used clubs to challenge ideas about Hindu men. In England, the clubs were used to challenge ideas about Englishwomen. Regardless of the methods employed, that both groups felt an affinity with the clubs demonstrates their political potential.

## Conclusion

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Like many other things, which enjoyed a considerable vogue in the past, demonstrations of club swinging no longer figure as items of public entertainment. Yet time was when feature events of this description drew big, intensely interested crowds.<sup>1</sup>

W.A. Pullum, 1951

Made in *Health and Strength*'s 'random recollections' column, Pullum's comments are indicative of current studies into the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Indian club phenomenon. The aim of this dissertation has been to move beyond histories that have noted Indian clubs' former popularity towards discussions of gender and colonialism. Utilizing Bourdieu's theories of bodily movement, the dissertation concerned itself with understanding English and Indian motivations for swinging clubs for minutes, hours and days at a time. For Indian exercisers, the clubs were revered religious objects, which in the 1860s were used to challenge colonial claims about Hindu men. Concurrently, for colonisers in India, the clubs were a method of ensuring longevity and disciplining unruly troops. For English exercisers, the clubs represented a means of creating, challenging or conforming to, numerous embodied gender identities.

Through three chapters, the dissertation examined first how Indian clubs were transported to England and second how they related to gender identities in India and England. Chapter One opened with a discussion of the clubs' pre-colonial history regarding its religious, military and health meanings. Such meanings were challenged by early nineteenth-century British understandings, which primarily saw Indian clubs as a health-sustaining device against the deleterious Indian climate. The colonial appropriation of club swinging coincided with a re-evaluation of colonial claims that all Indians were effeminate to claims centring on Bengali middle-class men, a claim that became increasingly important in post-Rebellion India.<sup>2</sup> The differentiated style of English club swinging in the post-1857 period saw army officials use Indians clubs to discipline and train Indian troops. A derogatory use contrasted with that of

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<sup>1</sup> W.A. Pullum, 'Random Recollections', *Health and Strength Magazine*, 27 December (1951), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter one, section two and Joseph S. Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46:03 (2004), 497; Sikata Banerjee and Subho Basu, 'The quest for manhood: Masculine Hinduism and nation in Sikata Bengal', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 26:3 (2006), 478-480.

the Hindu physical culture movement, which employed ‘traditional’ Indian clubs to challenge disparaging ideas about Hindu men. Although few historians have studied the use of indigenous exercises to challenge colonial ideas, the examination of club swinging practices revealed their importance in developing Hindu physiques capable of competing with western athletes.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately while the Hindu physical culture movement did not eradicate claims of Hindu effeminacy, it challenged perceptions and encouraged countless men to undertake Hindu exercises. In this way, Indian clubs evolved from object of fitness into a political tool whose use had definitive ends.

Transported to England, Indian clubs’ use was no less fraught. Beginning by examining Indian clubs’ assimilation into English life, Chapter Two revealed how club swinging came to be used to reinforce and challenge multiple gender identities amongst England’s upper and middle-classes prior to 1870. In doing so, club swinging manuals and their messages regarding gender were explored with reference to their popularity and reception. By lamenting the state of Englishmen and women, both physically and mentally, training manuals successfully presented Indian clubs as a necessary ‘treatment’ for concerned parties. As club swinging spread to the wider middle-classes from the 1850s, newer prescriptions for masculinity and femininity emerged, both of which proved more robust and athletic than before.

Gender norms continued to change in the nineteenth-century’s final decades, during which club swinging’s popularity grew. This popularity, as evidenced in Chapter Three’s opening section, witnessed a plethora of opinions emerge in club manuals regarding men and women. For some, men needed to be slender yet athletic, while for others, a stocky muscular build was the epitome of manhood. Similarly for some, athleticism was now acceptable for women, while others had no qualms about women using Indian clubs to gain employment. The club’s popularity was however ephemeral. At the dawn of the twentieth-century, English exercisers began turning away from club swinging towards the newly emerging physical culture systems. Disinterest in club swinging also emerged in the martial field, which in the aftermath of the South African War altered its training regimes by removing club swinging in favour of Ling Gymnastics, a body-weight system requiring no equipment. Despite the club’s declining popularity, their re-emergence in 1914 as weapons for the WSPU bodyguard was a

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<sup>3</sup> A good introduction on this topic is Paul Dimeo, ‘Colonial bodies, Colonial sport’, *The international journal of the history of sport*, 19:1 (2002), 72-90.

stark reminder of their martial past and ongoing relevance. The group's decision to use Indian clubs as weapons demonstrated, quite explicitly, how Indian clubs could be used to challenge ideas of femininity. The WSPU use echoed the Hindu physical culture's movement's appropriation of the clubs for political means with one important difference. While the Hindu movement was arguably passive, at least away from competition, the WSPU forcefully used Indian clubs to demand new norms for women.

The current work has brought several contributions to the clubs' historiography, both factually and analytically. Though it has been suggested that Englishmen encountered club swinging in the late eighteenth-century, this work's evaluation of primary sources suggests that the first interactions occurred in the early seventeenth-century.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore the dissertation shed light on Indian clubs' official incorporation into the British army, a point alluded to in other works but never substantiated with sources.<sup>5</sup> This included an examination of martial training, which was oftentimes underpinned by assumptions that Indian men were lazy or lacking. Such martial training differed from that of the Hindu physical culture movement, which sought to use Indian clubs to challenge derogatory assumptions about Indian men.<sup>6</sup> Although scholars have devoted considerable time to the movement's use of western sports, less attention has been spent on the training regimes undertaken for such athletic pursuits. In studying Indian clubs' importance for Hindu wrestlers, their training's political significance was highlighted. Wrestlers used Indian clubs to prepare for contest, to project masculine messages and to challenge claims about Hindus. While Alter discussed Hindu club swinging as a form of masculine identity formation, the current study extended this to Englishmen, Indian soldiers and Indian laymen. Despite the clubs' appearance and training methods changing during this period, the association between Indian clubs and masculinity never wavered.

The association between club swinging and gender was equally apparent in the English context, which although subject to greater historical scrutiny, has tended to neglect Indian clubs' relationship with gender. While McKrone, Doughan and Gordan noted the use of

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph S. Adler, 'Empowering yourself: sport sexuality and autoeroticism in north Indian jori swinging', in James H. Mills (ed.) *Subaltern sports: politics and sport in South Asia* (London, 2005), 48.

<sup>5</sup> Although Alter, 'Indian clubs and colonialism', notes this appropriation, he does not mention key documents such as Lieutenant Anderson's monograph on regulation clubs, mentioned in chapter one, section three, which was accompanied by official orders making Indian clubs a compulsory military exercise.

<sup>6</sup> John Rosselli, 'The self-image of effete: Physical education and nationalism in nineteenth-century Bengal', *Past and Present* (1980), 121-148.

Indian clubs to reinforce ideas about women's frailty during the early Victorian period, few works have examined the ways in which club swinging challenged such ideas.<sup>7</sup> This research's focus on how gender identities were negotiated through Indian clubs thus contrasts with previous studies. For this reason it is hoped that Indian clubs can now be viewed within the larger English sporting historiography, which has long noted gender's multifaceted interaction with exercise.<sup>8</sup> Similarly despite numerous works on the medical community's role in reinforcing gender identities, few studies have extended this approach to Indian clubs. Studying the interactions between physicians and club swinging thus adds to the aforementioned historiographical landscape. Finally, the present dissertation attempted to address the gap in suffragist historiography regarding physical culture. It was the interaction between the WSPU and jujutsu, which facilitated the suffragist bodyguard's establishment in 1914. Although previous histories have noted the bodyguard's use of Indian clubs, little analysis has been conducted.<sup>9</sup> In analysing this point in WSPU history, the work drew upon the interactions between physical culture and the WSPU. Such work further emphasises the need for historians to thoroughly examine interactions between the suffragist movement and physical exercise. An area Kay highlighted in 2008 to little avail.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the questions set out in the introduction, it is argued the British adoption of club swinging was based upon mortality concerns for men in India. Appropriating the clubs for medical purposes encouraged what MacAloon identified as an 'emptying' process, whereby Indian clubs' original meanings were replaced with new ideas of health and discipline. This process resulted in the reformulation of traditional Indian clubs and exercises into distinctly English practices. While Alter previously applied MacAloon's theory to the Indian clubs, he did so theoretically, without a thorough examination of the sources.<sup>11</sup> The current work has provided a source-based argument for this 'emptying' process. Having examined how the colonial appropriation was justified, it was argued that club swinging in Indian and English

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<sup>7</sup> Kathleen E. McCrone, *Playing the game: Sport and the physical emancipation of English women, 1870-1914* (Kentucky, 1988), 9; David Doughan and Peter Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (London, 2007), 63-64; Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Macon, 1998), 97.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Vertinsky, 'Gender relations, women's history and sport history: A decade of changing enquiry, 1983-1993', *Journal of Sport History*, 21:1 (1994), 1-24.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Jane Purvis, 'Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) and Votes for Women', in Sandra Holden and Jane Purvis (eds.), *Votes for Women* (Abingdon, 2000), 128; Richard J. Evans, *The feminists: women's emancipation movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920* (London, 1977) 197; Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London, 1973), 223.

<sup>10</sup> Joyce Kay, 'It wasn't just Emily Davison! Sport, suffrage and society in Edwardian Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25:10 (2008), 1338.

<sup>11</sup> Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism', 501.

exercise regimens was used to reinforce and challenge embodied gender stereotypes surrounding Hindu men. For army officials, club swinging was used to discipline Indian troops thought to be lacking in strength and health.<sup>12</sup> Conversely the Hindu physical culture movement used club swinging to challenge these unfavourable claims. That both groups used Indian clubs for different purposes was indicative of the clubs' abilities to reinforce and challenge ideas about gender.

In the English context Indian clubs were used to create, challenge or confirm, numerous masculine and feminine identities. From their introduction in the 1830s to their declining popularity in the 1900s, club swinging manuals strongly sought to marry ideas of masculinity and femininity to the body. While such ideas proved attractive for some, for others Indian clubs were a means of challenging these identities. Women used club swinging to gain employment, become athletes and gain prestige in the gymnasium. Men used clubs to develop a plethora of identities, which were often contrasted with one another. An innocuous form of physical activity, club swinging can nevertheless be viewed as a prism through which ideas of what it meant to be a man or woman were reinforced and challenged.

Furthermore it was argued that in the latter half of the nineteenth-century club swinging became a politicized form of exercise for both the Hindu physical culture movement and WSPU. For the Hindu movement, Indian clubs acted as both training and propaganda devices. Regarding the latter, both Singh and Gama used Indian clubs to showcase their impressive physical capital. Singh was praised for wielding the heaviest clubs seen by some Englishmen while Gama regularly attracted spectators to his training sessions. In this way club swinging became a means for Hindu men to challenge claims they were effeminate. The movement's implicit use of Indian clubs can be contrasted with the WSPU, who used the clubs as weapons. An appropriation that symbolised the group's disapproval of an English political body perceived as denying women the right to vote. For suffragists, training with and wielding Indian clubs was an inherently political act, as it was done in preparation for physical clashes. Though their motives differed, the Hindu physical culture movement and WSPU demonstrated that Indian clubs could and did, have a political element.

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul Dimeo, 'A Parcel of Dummies'? Sport and the Body in Indian History', in James H. Mills, and Satadru Sen (eds.), *Confronting the Body: the Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Post-Colonial India* (London 2004), 39-43 for the Colonisers' use of sport in India.

Studying Indian clubs' diverse nineteenth and early-twentieth century history, the dissertation made significant use of Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field'. Using the varying club swinging habitus as an object of study, the dissertation first examined the colonial significance of Indian clubs in India. Exploring contrasts between English and indigenous club swinging habitus, the dissertation illustrated how British exercisers adopted Indian clubs to create a physique and comportment different to Hindu exercisers. Habitus was equally important for the study of the Hindu physical culture movement, which used a specified mode of club swinging to build muscular physiques and perform acts of strength. In this manner, one's club swinging habitus in colonial India told of wider societal trends. British exercisers and soldiers swung Indian clubs in a deliberate attempt to bolster one's health or improve discipline. From the 1860s Hindu exercisers swung clubs to prove their strength and more significantly, their manliness. Similarly, the varying club swinging habitus in the English context proved important. From the 1830s, English exercisers used club swinging as a means correcting perceived health problems and to gain social prestige. Attempts to convert specified club swinging habitus into something socially advantageous was apparent in those training manuals which linked the clubs' benefits to advancements in the workplace, classroom and in daily life. In this way, one's club swinging habitus was expected to transfer into other aspects of their life.

Understanding how and why certain body types became desirable, the dissertation utilized Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and physical capital. Exploring the various physical capitals, in this case physiques, produced by club swinging, the dissertation highlighted the perceived social and political advantages of certain body types over others. For Englishmen in India, a slender, sinewy physique produced by club swinging embodied ideas of health and discipline. A physique contrasted with that elevated by the Hindu physical culture movement, which prioritized an overtly muscular body thought capable of proving a Hindu masculinity. In the English context numerous male and female body types became imbued with a diverse range of messages about health, education, class and politics. Utilizing Bourdieu's concepts, the dissertation highlighted how different physiques became desirable over time and why.

Navigating through the complex Indian club story, the dissertation used of Bourdieu's field concept to delineate Indian clubs' importance for individual groups. As discussed, club swinging in the martial field took on significantly different messages to those in the fitness field. Similarly the manner in which clubs were used in the classroom differed from the

doctors' office. Using the field metaphor, the dissertation demonstrated how actors used Indian clubs in ways specific to their interests. This proved particularly useful in examining how Indian clubs were brought to England and how they spread throughout English society.

Owing to the time constraints of a nine-month thesis, the present study limited itself to the broader Indian and English Indian club story. By way of conclusion three lines of inquiry for are proposed which extend beyond the current dissertation's research. The first of which is related to the transatlantic fitness community. Sporting historians have previously highlighted the transatlantic nature of soccer, rugby and gymnastics, yet few have studied individual exercise systems such as club swinging.<sup>13</sup> As discussed, Indian clubs were a widely recognised form of exercise in India, North America and the British Empire. Studying the similarities and contrasts in the messages and exercise systems of these varying locations gives the opportunity to present something of a world history through Indian clubs. As Singleton and Park demonstrated in their respective studies of yoga and sport, this approach helps locate seemingly national trends into a broader global discussion.<sup>14</sup> This global discussion was alluded to within the dissertation but could not be dealt with in greater detail owing to the research's primary focus on gender. A comprehensive study of Indian, British and North American interactions with club swinging could thus prove particularly fruitful. While the current work focused primarily on the English context, future work could examine the peripheries of the British Empire as part of this transatlantic fitness community.

Conversely, a regional history of Indian clubs in India or England would prove equally illuminating and perhaps overcome the source limitations discussed in the introduction regarding indigenous Indian texts and texts centring on England's working-class exercisers. Previous works on English pastimes have demonstrated the richness that regional studies can provide to larger historiographical discussions surrounding sport and leisure.<sup>15</sup> It is suspected that club swinging in Newcastle was different from London. How far the broad gender identities discussed in the dissertation extended across England has the potential to illustrate

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<sup>13</sup> See Matthew Taylor, 'Transatlantic Football: Rethinking the Transfer of Football from Europe to the USA, c. 1880-c. 1930s', *Ethnologie française*, 41:4 (2011), 645-654; Tony Collins, *The Oval World: A Global History of Rugby* (London, 2015); Gertrud Pfister, *Gymnastics, a transatlantic movement: From Europe to America* (London, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Mark Singleton, *Yoga body: The origins of modern posture practice* (Oxford, 2010); Roberta J. Park, 'Sport, gender and society in a transatlantic Victorian perspective', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24:12 (2007), 1570-1603.

<sup>15</sup> Gary James and Dave Day, 'The Emergence of an Association Football Culture in Manchester 1840-1884', *Sport in History*, 34:1 (2014), 49-74.

the importance of localized concerns about health. Depending on the availability of sources, city studies could be attempted. Assiduous work in England's local archives may result in the emergence of sources explicitly connected to England's working-class, which as mentioned in the introduction are often neglected in popular works. Similarly within the Indian context, research conducted away from the Bengal region could illustrate the extent to which physical culture permeated across Indian society. Studies into football and cricket have demonstrated this to an extent but little work has been done on indigenous forms of physical culture, despite historians referring to movements in Calcutta and elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> An examination into physical culture's popularity outside of Bengal could add new insights into the Hindu physical culture movement's historiography. While this dissertation limited itself to colonial sources, it is suspected that indigenous Hindu sources would be particularly valuable for such research. As a relatively under-researched topic, Indian clubs could provide a starting point.

Finally, it is suggested that a commercial study of Indian clubs could potentially reveal larger nineteenth and early twentieth-century societal and business trends. Such an approach would situate Indian clubs into broader social histories, which have used sporting equipment as a lens for commercial histories. For example, a series of works on the social histories of tennis, cricket and football have demonstrated the importance of rackets, bats and jerseys for both producers and consumers.<sup>17</sup> Domestic and international sellers sold Indian clubs in England in numerous shapes and sizes at varying costs. Studying the advertising campaigns and business practices of individual manufacturers, such as American manufacturer Simon Kehoe, could illustrate health, advertising and consumption trends. Additionally, examining how Indian clubs became more affordable during the course of the nineteenth-century could illustrate advances in manufacturing processes, alongside consumers' growing buying power.

Despite their obscurity amongst current exercisers, Indian clubs were one of England's most recognisable fitness tools during the nineteenth and early twentieth-century. During this time, Indian clubs were used to negotiate complex and fluid gender constructs regarding correct ways of being. At any one time in England, male exercisers were informed they needed to be muscular, slender, elegant and powerful. Similarly women were told to be delicate yet strong, athletic yet ladylike. Such contrasting messages, as espoused by training manuals and public

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<sup>16</sup> Ronojoy Sen, *Nation at Play: A History of Sport in India*, (Columbia, 2015), 97.

<sup>17</sup> Derek Birley, *A social history of English cricket* (London, 2013); Charlotte A. Jirousek, 'Superstars, superheroes and the male body image: The visual implications of football uniforms', *Journal of American Culture*, 19:2 (1996), 1-11; Robert J. Lake, *A Social History of Tennis in Britain* (London, 2014).

figures, came to play in the act of club swinging. In this manner, club swinging was no trivial affair, but rather an act of masculine and feminine identity formation. That different bodies produced by club swinging became imbued with differing gender identities demonstrates Indian clubs' importance during this period. In India, Indian clubs' use was no less fraught. For colonisers, the clubs were used to maintain health, and later, to reform and discipline Indian troops perceived as lesser. For Hindu exercisers, Indian clubs were revered religious objects, which in the 1860s became a means of challenging colonial claims surrounding their supposed effeminacy. In England and India, club swinging and the bodies it produced, came to represent numerous messages about embodied gender identities. Such gender identities were continually confirmed or challenged through the act of club swinging, demonstrating the club's silent yet profound importance during this period.

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