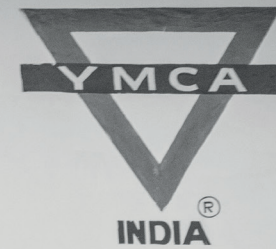
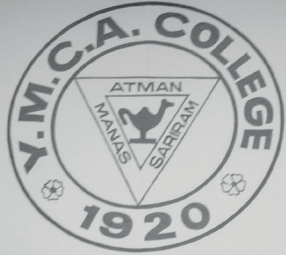


SPORTS



MASSEY HALL

Building Champions:

The Unwavering Commitment
of YMCA College of Physical Education

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION. I LEAVE IT TO YOU,
BELOVED YOUNG MEN OF MANY COUNTRIES TO CARRY ON
AND TO EXTEND..... By Sir. George Williams





“We walk past greatness every day, blinded by the routine of our lives.”

In the vibrant heart of Chennai, many of us have glanced at, participated in, or witnessed events and concerts at the sprawling YMCA campus in Nandanam. Yet, few are aware of the esteemed institution that lies behind it or the core mission and vision that fuel its remarkable success. We are speaking of the illustrious “YMCA College of Physical Education.” It is truly uplifting to discover the institution's unwavering dedication to preparing physical education leaders of high academic caliber, with a profound focus on nurturing physically fit, socially engaged, and emotionally resilient individuals.

Mr. Johnson Premkumar, Principal of this esteemed institution, offers valuable insights as we delve into the remarkable journey of this institution and its steadfast commitment to nurturing sports in Chennai.

“Great things are born from moments of wonder and the courage to explore.”

The inspiring origins of the YMCA movement dates to over 180 years. Founded by George Williams, it started as a small group of friends gathering

for prayer and fellowship. From these modest beginnings, the YMCA has over the years grown into a prominent international organization.

The YMCA's foray into physical education was marked by the establishment of a college in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1920, dedicated to training young people in the scientific principles of physical education with a vision to promote physical education worldwide.

“Those who dare to envision a better future accept the call of duty with courage.”

A pivotal figure in the history of YMCA Chennai is Mr. Harry Crowe Buck, the founder of the YMCA College of Physical Education. Born in Pennsylvania, USA, Buck graduated in physical education and had a background in coaching various sports teams, including football and baseball. Responding to a call from the Springfield YMCA to establish a physical education program worldwide, particularly in India, he and his wife, Mary Buck, embarked on a transformative journey to our country. Driven by passion for physical education, Harry Crowe Buck was determined to establish a groundbreaking program



in India. He faced numerous challenges on his journey to India, traveling by ship for more than 180 days and landing at the Madras port but there was no turning back. Upon arriving in Madras, Mr. Buck initiated a fitness program at the Madras YMCA, which eventually evolved into a comprehensive physical education initiative.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”

In August of 1920, the YMCA School of Physical Education was officially established with just five eager students. Theory classes were held at the Madras YMCA Esplanade and the practical sessions took place at the YMCA Boys Town school near Fort Station. Gradually the school's growth over the next couple of years necessitated the move to a larger facility in Royapettah from which the college started operating.

“Some special milestones not just define achievements but hold the stories of our growth.”

A hugely significant milestone in the school's history occurred in 1924 when the International Olympic Committee invited India to send a team to the Paris Olympics.

Mr. Harry Crowe Buck was entrusted with the monumental task of preparing students from the School of Physical Education for this prestigious event. Mr. Buck proudly became the first coach, and manager of the Indian Olympic team, leading them to Paris for the inaugural participation – a truly defining moment.

Despite limited facilities and numerous challenges, Mr. Buck diligently trained students to compete on an international stage, leaving an indelible mark on Indian sports and paving the way for the evolution of a great institution.

“It's not the asset itself but how you leverage it that determines its true value!”

In 1932, the Government of Madras recognized the unwavering dedication and passion of the YMCA and gifted 63 acres of land in Nandanam to further its mission. Originally a forest area, Buck envisioned and systematically executed its development to create various facilities. Over the years, this has resulted in the establishment of several playgrounds, sports fields and courts, hostels, laboratories, libraries, and resource centers.

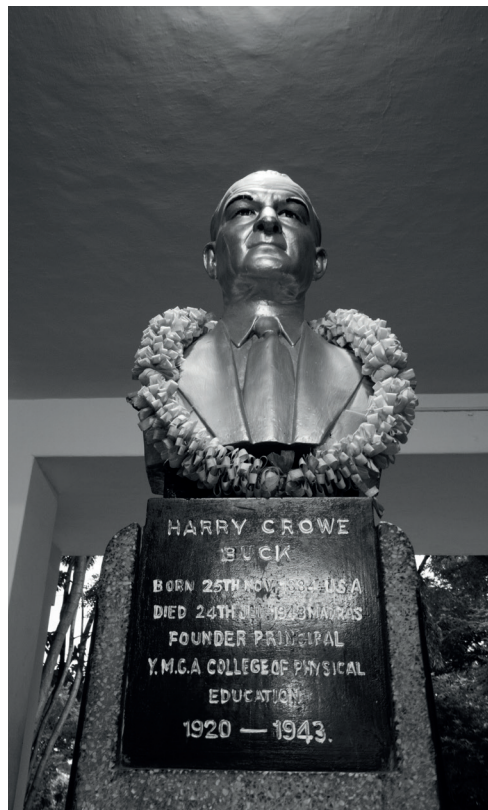
Mr. Premkumar emphasized the far-reaching impact of the YMCA's physical education program. Beyond the establishment of a distinguished institution, shaping and grooming teachers and leaders in Physical Education, there is an equal focus and a profound commitment to nurturing physical, mental, moral, and spiritual values. This holistic approach seeks to cultivate citizens who are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the nation, embodying the cherished motto of the YMCA: Abundant Life!

“A vibrant curriculum, dedicated faculty, and engaged students together forge a legacy of excellence”

YMCA Chennai offers a dynamic curriculum that encompasses a wide range of subjects such as anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, biomechanics, nanotechnology, and sports psychology. These are designed to enable the students to grasp the core sciences that influence multiple facets of the physical education discipline.

The institution provides a Diploma in Physical Education (DPE), a Bachelor of Physical Education and Sciences (BPES), and a Master of Physical Education (MPED), along with a PhD program, all recognized by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). Admission involves rigorous selection trials, including physical tests, ensuring that only the most dedicated and capable students are admitted. Additionally, evening courses, such as the increasingly popular MSc in Fitness, are available.

The school has a strength of 500-600 residential students and boasts a healthy gender ratio. Mr. Premkumar proudly states, “Our faculty members, predominantly our own alumni are dedicated to grooming the next generation of physical education leaders.” Besides being well-qualified, they engage in continuous professional development to uphold high standards of teaching and mentorship. They are also



encouraged to attend international conferences and present papers, fostering a culture of ongoing learning and collaboration.

YMCA Chennai takes great pride in its alumni, who have made significant contributions across various fields. Notable alumni include Dr. Sheila Stephen, former Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, and Commissioner Walter Devaram, an IPS officer. The alumni often participate in homecoming events, where they recall fond memories, visit their former hostel, and reconnect with fellow graduates.

“Viewing inclusive education not merely as a duty but as a means to discover potential!”

YMCA excels in inclusive education by innovating sports activities for visually impaired and intellectually disabled children. The institution has pioneered in developing adapted variations of games, such as volleyball played on the same court but with an under-net along with similar adaptations in tennis, table tennis, and rattle-ball. In 2006, a school for children with intellectual disabilities was established, initially enrolling 25 students. There have been notable successes in studying and implementing the influence of physical education on children with autism.

“Navigating Challenges with perseverance and creativity”

Running an institution of this magnitude comes with its challenges. Considering the financial backgrounds and strained situations of many families, the institution is sharply focused on addressing the monetary struggles and motivation issues by facilitating student scholarships, welfare and safety measures as also offering courses at concessional rates.

Principal Dr. Premkumar highlights the daily obstacles, right from maintaining the expansive campus to managing staff and student behavior and needs. Despite these challenges, the college has implemented several strategies to uphold discipline and enhance student engagement. In particular, the importance of discipline

in physical education is emphasized through a balanced “carrot and stick” approach.

“Let your passion and dreams soar higher!”

Despite several challenges, YMCA Physical Education Chennai is continuously committed to expanding its sports facilities, plans to introduce new disciplines such as squash and futsal. The gym is also being modernized with state-of-the-art equipment, highlighting the institution's commitment to providing top-notch facilities. Renovations include enhancements to the gym, the addition of skating facilities, and the development of a multipurpose hall with a gallery, all aimed at ensuring effective maintenance and optimal usage. As part of the centenary celebration of Olympic participation in the current year, the vision for the academic year includes initiatives such as sports programs for corporations and elementary schools, a commemorative stamp for the founder, a tournament for auto rickshaw drivers, and sports activities for transgender individuals.

“True change is revolutionary, and it requires perseverance and persistence to bring dreams to fruition.”

YMCA Chennai stands as a testament to the transformative power of physical education. While the importance of fitness and physical education in the current times is widely recognized, the college's focus on this subject was revolutionary at a time when it was unheard of. The college's dedication to excellence, inclusivity, and innovation ensures it remains a leader in physical education and sports.

The Champions of Chennai Award for “YMCA College of Physical Education” is a fitting recognition of the remarkable legacy and enduring impact on physical education and its role in nurturing young talent. The institution's rich history and continued dedication to excellence make it a deserving candidate for this honor.

by Shanthi Krishna