



STRONGHER

“

Reclaiming the strength
that was never meant to be
Gender Dependent

”



— *by* **TIMSI BECTOR**



FIT INDIA AMBASSADOR



FOUNDER: VTL – VIGOUR TRANSFORMING LIVES

STRONG BODY. STRONG MIND. STRONGER INDIA.

STRONGHER

Reclaiming the Strength that was never meant to be
Gender Dependent

By
TIMSI BECTOR



Natrajë
PUBLISHING HOUSE

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*This book is respectfully dedicated to my
mother in heaven*

Acknowledgements

Some books are written with words. Some are written with experiences, struggles, lessons, and the people who quietly shape who we become. *STRONGHER* is written with all of these and with immense gratitude.

First and always, this book belongs to my mother. She is no longer here to hold this book in her hands, but everything I am today carries a part of her. If I have learnt to stand on my own feet, to believe in myself, to face challenges without surrendering, and to walk into unfamiliar spaces with courage, it is because she taught me the meaning of strength long before I understood the word.

She raised me not merely to be a good daughter, but to become an independent woman—to have a voice, to have dreams, and to have the courage to pursue them. Many of the qualities that people may see in me today were first nurtured by her. I wish she were here to read these pages, because somewhere within every chapter is a part of the woman she raised.

Maa, this book is my tribute to you. Whatever strength I carry today began with you.

I am equally grateful to my father, whose love, faith and presence have been an integral part of my journey. To my parents, and to the family they gave me, thank you for giving me roots strong enough to let me grow.

My gratitude extends to my entire family my loving brother and his family, my in-laws, my extended in-laws family, and every member of my family who has stood beside me in ways both big and small. Behind every woman who dares to step beyond the familiar is often a family that gives her the freedom to do so. I have experienced enough. He simply helped turn an idea into an opportunity.

That has been his way of loving me—not by holding me back, but by giving my dreams room to breathe.

Even while writing this book, his support has remained constant. For every woman who is trying to become stronger, there is immense power in having someone who says, “Go ahead. Try.” I have been blessed to have that person beside me.

To my daughters, Kaashvi Bector and Parinika Bector you are among the greatest blessings of my life.

I began pursuing many of my dreams when I was already in my late thirties. By then, motherhood had taught me that children can become a woman’s greatest responsibility but you taught me something equally important: motherhood does not have to be the end of a woman’s dreams.

Whenever I had to step out of home to pursue something new, you were often the first ones to reassure me, “Mumma, don’t worry. We will take care of ourselves.”

I know there were moments when you missed me. I know there were times when my absence was felt. And yet, instead of making me feel guilty for pursuing my dreams, you gave me the courage to pursue them.

You grew a little more independent so that I could grow a little more as an individual.

You learnt to take responsibility for yourselves, to manage your lives, and to understand that your mother could be both—your mother and a woman with dreams of her own. for that, I will always be grateful.

I hope that one day, when you look back at my journey, you will not only see the things I achieved, but also understand the lesson I wanted to leave behind for you: never believe that you have to

shrink your dreams to fit into a role. You can love your family deeply and still make space for yourself.

To all my friends, colleagues, mentors, well-wishers, and everyone who has walked alongside me at different stages of my life thank you. Some of you may not even realise how much a word of encouragement, a message, a phone call, an introduction, a gesture of faith, or simply your presence meant to me at a particular moment.

To my VTL community, my online community, and everyone who has followed, encouraged, challenged and believed in my journey, thank you for allowing my experiences to become a part of your lives. Every message from a woman who started moving again, every person who chose strength over self-doubt, and every story of someone reclaiming confidence has reminded me why this journey matters.

And to all those people who may have stood only at the periphery of my journey but still contributed something a smile, a conversation, an opportunity, a word of appreciation, a lesson, even a challenge thank you. Not everyone who changes our lives stays in the centre of our story. Some people appear for only a chapter, but leave behind a sentence we carry forever.

Finally, I want to acknowledge every woman whose story lives somewhere within these pages.

STRONGHER is not only about my journey. It is about the countless women who have been told, directly or indirectly, that their dreams have an expiry date; that strength belongs to men; that motherhood should come at the cost of identity; that age should determine ambition; that taking care of everyone else should mean forgetting themselves.

I wrote this book because I have learnt that strength is not something we suddenly discover one day.

Sometimes, it is something our mothers plant within us.

Sometimes, it is something our families protect.

Sometimes, it is something our partners make space for.

Sometimes, our children teach us to reclaim.

And sometimes, we discover it only when life leaves us no choice but to stand up and say—

I am still here.

I still have dreams.

And I am still becoming.

To every person who has been a part of that becoming in my life, I offer my deepest gratitude.

And to my mother, wherever you are—

this is your daughter, carrying forward the strength you gave her.

With love and gratitude,

Timsi Bector

Appreciation

मयंक श्रीवास्तव, भा.पु.से.
उप महानिदेशक
Mayank Srivastava, IPS
Deputy Director General



भारतीय खेल प्राधिकरण
SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

APPRECIATION LETTER

"STRONGHER is a compelling and thought-provoking exploration of women's strength—not merely as physical power, but as resilience, confidence, self-belief and the ability to shape one's own life. The book beautifully connects women's fitness and wellbeing with the larger vision of a healthier and stronger society. What particularly stands out is its emphasis on nourishment, movement and strength rather than restriction and stereotypes. As a male reader, I found the book an important reminder that empowering women through fitness and health is equally an investment in the strength of families, communities and the nation. STRONGHER carries a message that is both timely and relevant to India's growing fitness and sporting culture."

(Mayank Srivastava, IPS)
Deputy Director General, Khelo India
Sports Authority of India

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Appreciation



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APPRECIATION

"**STRONGHER**" by Timsi Bector is more than a book on food and exercise- it is an honest conversation with women about taking charge of their health. In an age of social media myths and quick-fix solutions, the author brings a refreshing blend of practical wisdom and scientific understanding.

What makes this book special is its effort to break the stereotypes surrounding women's fitness. Timsi Bector encourages women to move beyond the fear of strength training and embrace fitness as a means to become stronger, healthier, and more confident. Her emphasis on strength and conditioning as tools for lifelong wellness is both timely and empowering.

Equally admirable is the simplicity of her nutritional guidance. The book avoids complicated jargon and unrealistic diets, instead offering sensible, easy-to-follow tips that can fit into everyday life. This practical approach makes the journey towards better health feel achievable and sustainable.

As a male reader, I particularly appreciate the author's ability to make fitness less about appearance and more about capability, well-being, and self-belief. "**STRONGHER**" is an inspiring and much-needed guide that has the potential to encourage many women to rethink fitness, challenge, old myths, and confidently embark on their journey towards a healthier life.

With best wishes



Appreciation

Some people we meet, and some life chooses to bring back into our path. Meeting her again after many years felt like one such quiet turn of destiny. In the years between, I saw that he had transformed discipline into a way of life, rising through dedication to become a fitness champion.

When we met again, however, life had presented her with a different challenge—an injury that tested the very strength she had built. What stood out was not the setback, but her faith, resilience and resolve to rise again. As a mother of two daughters, her journey carries a message beyond herself: our children often learn strength by watching us live it. This book therefore speaks of fitness not merely as physique, but as nourishment, self-respect, resilience and preparedness for life. *Strong Her, Strong Bharat* captures that larger truth—for the strength of a woman flows into her family, the next generation and ultimately the nation.

Perhaps true strength is not measured by how high we rise, but by what within us rises when life tests us.

-Major General VJS Varaich

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Introduction

“Reclaiming a strength that was never meant to be gender dependent”

For generations strength has been viewed through a narrow lens. It has often been associated with masculinity while women have been praised for being soft, docile, sacrificing, selfless in the name of feminism, yet strength was never meant to belong to one gender. It is a human attribute; it is the ability to move, to grow, to overcome, to contribute and to lead. Today women across India are increasingly being recognized not merely as daughters, wives, mothers or caregivers but as equal citizens with aspirations, capabilities, rights and responsibilities. They are scientists, educators, athletes, entrepreneurs, soldiers, policymakers, artists and leaders. They are claiming their space in every sphere of life not by asking for permission but by demonstrating their worth unapologetically.

My own journey through fitness has shown me this transformation first hand. As a fitness educator, Wellness professional and a Fit India Champion associated with the Fit India Movement I have had the privilege of interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, professions, age groups and walks of life. What strikes

me the most is that within the fitness community, labels often lose their significance. People rarely ask me how many household chores I have completed, how efficiently I manage a kitchen or what dishes I can prepare. Instead our conversations revolve around movement, health, discipline, nutrition, strength, recovery and growth. We discuss our challenges, our goals and the ways in which we can inspire others to live healthier lives. In these spaces I am not valued because I am a woman I am valued because my voice, knowledge, experience and contribution matters. That feeling of inclusion is powerful.

Fitness has an extraordinary ability to unite people. It transcends age, profession, social status, language, religion and gender. A cyclist, a runner, a teacher, a doctor, a homemaker, a student, a soldier and a corporate executive may have literally nothing in common on the surface, yet they can all find common ground during a morning walk, a workout session, a yoga class, in a swimming pool, a sports field or a shared commitment to better health.

Fitness is not limited to gyms and weight training. It is reflected in walking, running, cycling, swimming, sports , yoga, pilates, dance, trekking, rope skipping, recreational activities, community events and countless other forms of movement.

At its core fitness is a celebration of what the human body is capable of doing and this is precisely why I have chosen to talk about fitness.

Not because fitness is about appearance or shrinking ourselves to fit unrealistic standards or chasing a number on a weighing scale.

I talk about fitness because it is one of the most powerful tools for empowerment. A physically strong woman is often a more confident woman. A well-nourished girl is more likely to learn, perform and thrive better in all aspects of life. A healthy mother is better equipped to care for her family. A community that values movement and well-being creates healthier future generations by demonstrating a healthier living environment of coexistence.

Fitness is not really a personal pursuit. Its impact extends far beyond the individual it influences. It extends to families, communities, workplaces, society and ultimately Nation.

This book is an invitation to rethink fitness not as a luxury, not as a trend and certainly not as a pursuit reserved for a privileged few. It is an invitation to reclaim strength, health, confidence and capability as fundamental human rights. Most importantly it is an invitation for woman to recognize that strength was never something they needed to borrow from anyone else it was always theirs; they simply need to reclaim it.

“The rise of fitness as a mass movement in Modern Bharat”

There are moments in a nation’s journey when an idea transcends policy and becomes a movement. The Fit India Movement is one such idea.

Launched on 29 August 2019, National Sports Day, by the honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, the Fit India Movement was envisioned not merely as a government program but as a people’s movement. Its objective was simple yet transformative: to encourage every citizen to make fitness an integral part of daily life and to create a culture in which health, physical activity and sports become a way of life rather than occasional pursuits.

In his address at the launch, the Prime Minister emphasised that fitness has always been an integral part of India’s cultural heritage. He observed that modern lifestyles and increase independence on technology have reduced everyday physical activity. Where previous generations worked long distances, cycled regularly, and naturally incorporated movement in their daily routines, contemporary life has become increasingly sedentary. The Fit India Movement was conceived as an effort to reverse this trend and inspire individuals to embrace small but meaningful lifestyle changes.

One of the most powerful aspects of this vision was its inclusiveness. Fitness was not presented as an elite pursuit reserved for athletes, bodybuilders and sports professionals. Instead, it was described as a universal

responsibility and opportunity - equally relevant to students, teachers, homemakers, professionals, senior citizens, and people from every social and economic background. The message was clear: fitness belongs to everyone.

The Prime Minister often highlighted a simple yet profound principle : A healthy individual contributes to a healthy family, a healthy family contributes to a healthy society and a healthy society forms a healthier nation. Fitness, therefore, is not merely a personal goal; it is a collective asset.

This philosophy aligns with several broader initiatives introduced over the years that seek to empower citizens and improve quality of life. Programmes promoting education for girls, financial inclusion, sanitation, health awareness, and social welfare share a common objective—to enable individuals to realize their full potential. Within this larger framework, fitness occupies a unique position because it influences every dimension of human development: physical health, mental well-being, productivity, resilience, confidence, and longevity.

What makes the Fit India Movement particularly significant is its ability to unite people across differences. In fitness spaces, professional identities often become secondary. Doctors, teachers, soldiers, entrepreneurs, students, homemakers, and corporate professionals participate side by side. Their conversations revolve around progress, discipline, nutrition, recovery, movement, and personal growth. Fitness creates

a common language that transcends age, gender, profession, and background.

The movement has further expanded through numerous campaigns and community initiatives. Programmes such as the Fit India Freedom Run, Fit India School Week, Fit India Cycling Drives, yoga-based activities, community fitness challenges, and public awareness campaigns have encouraged millions of people to participate in physical activity in forms that suit their interests and abilities. These initiatives have reinforced an important message: fitness is not confined to a gym. It can be expressed through walking, running, cycling, swimming, sports, yoga, traditional games, dance, trekking, rope skipping, and countless other forms of movement.

The role of the Sports Authority of India and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been instrumental in carrying this vision forward. Through awareness campaigns, grassroots engagement, school programmes, sporting events, and community outreach, they have helped transform fitness from an individual aspiration into a collective movement. The continued efforts of sports administrators, coaches, educators, volunteers, athletes, and fitness ambassadors across the country have ensured that the message reaches citizens from metropolitan cities to rural communities. One of the biggest campaign of Fit India Movement has been "Sundays On Cycle", an initiative by our Honourable Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mr. Mansukh Mandaviya.

As someone associated with this movement, I have experienced firsthand the sense of belonging it creates. Within the fitness community, I am not judged by traditional expectations of what a woman should or should not do. My value is determined by my contribution, my knowledge, my discipline, and my commitment to helping others lead healthier lives. It is a space where voices are heard, ideas are exchanged, and mutual growth is celebrated.

That, perhaps, is the true strength of the fitness movement.

It reminds us that strength, Health and Potential have no gender. And when people come together in pursuit of better health, they discover that fitness is far more than physical transformation—it is a pathway to confidence, inclusion, empowerment, and collective progress.

What is Sundays on Cycle?

The campaign was launched on **17 December 2024** by Mr Mansukh Mandaviya under the Fit India Movement. It is a weekly nationwide cycling and fitness movement aimed at promoting physical activity, reducing pollution, encouraging sustainable transport, and building community participation.

Growth of the Campaign

Period	Participants	Locations	Key Milestone
Launch (Dec 2024)	~500 cyclists in Delhi	~1,000 locations	First edition launched nationally
Feb 2025	2 lakh+ participants	4,000+ locations	Rapid expansion in 2 months
Aug 2025	7.5 lakh+ participants	41,000+ locations	Reached villages nationwide
Dec 2025 (55 editions)	2.2 crore+ cumulative participants	1.81 lakh+ locations	National mass movement
May 2026 (74th edition)	32 lakh+ cumulative participants*	5,000+ active locations per week	Continuing nationwide participation

*Some reports use cumulative registered participation while others report weekly participation figures, so methodologies differ.

Key National Statistics

Participation

- More than **2.2 crore (22 million)** cumulative participants by the 55th edition.
- More than **50,000 people participate every week** across the country.
- The movement has spread across approximately **700 districts of India**.
- Panchayat representatives from **50,000+ villages** have participated and promoted the campaign in rural India.

Geographic Reach

- Conducted in state capitals, district headquarters, villages, educational institutions, SAI centres, Khelo India centres, military areas, universities, and community grounds.
- Events have even been organised in challenging regions such as **Kargil**, demonstrating nationwide participation.

Weekly Event Scale

Typical Sunday editions now include:

- 5,000–6,000+ event locations.
- 50,000+ direct participants every week.
- Cycling rallies, yoga, Zumba, rope skipping, traditional games, fitness challenges, and awareness drives.

Notable Editions

25th Edition (World Bicycle Day Celebration)

- More than 1,500 cyclists joined the flagship Delhi rally.
- Dedicated to India's armed forces through a Tiranga Cycling Rally.

35th Edition

- Panchayat representatives from over 50,000 villages participated.
- Total movement had crossed 7 lakh participants nationwide by this stage.

65th Edition

- Conducted at 5,000+ locations.
- Around 10,000 participants gathered at Connaught Place, Delhi in partnership with Raahgiri Foundation.

74th Edition

- Around 50,000 participants at 5,000 locations across India.
- Total participation crossed 32 lakh according to campaign reporting.

Who Participates?

The campaign intentionally targets all age groups:

- School students
- College youth
- Women
- Senior citizens
- Armed forces personnel
- Police personnel
- Teachers
- Farmers
- Corporate employees
- Delivery workers
- Fitness enthusiasts
- Sports champions and Olympians

Government reports describe participation from virtually every section of society.

Why the Campaign Matters

The campaign is designed around four major goals:

- 1. Increase physical activity** and combat lifestyle diseases.
- 2. Reduce obesity and inactivity**, especially among youth.
- 3. Promote cycling as an eco-friendly transport option.**
- 4. Build community fitness culture** through weekly participation.

From a modest beginning of roughly **500 cyclists in Delhi in December 2024**, Fit India's Sundays on Cycle has grown into a movement that has engaged **more than 2.2 crore Indians across over 1.8 lakh locations and nearly 700 districts of the country.**



Scan to read full article

Chapter 1

My Journey: From Survival to Strength

When people see me today—as a fitness professional, wellness coach, fitness ambassador, content creator, and entrepreneur—they often assume that fitness has always been a part of my life.

The truth is far more interesting.

I was born into a simple, middle-class nuclear family. My father served as a PCS officer, while my mother established herself as a respected educationist in Punjab. Education, discipline, integrity and hard work were the values that shaped our home.

Fitness was present in my childhood, but not in the way one might imagine.

My father was a national champion in weightlifting and bodybuilding. He was a well-known personality in the field and a mentor to many aspiring athletes and weightlifters. As children, my younger brother

and I grew up watching gym equipments, weights, and workout spaces as a normal part of everyday life. Fitness was not something extraordinary in our home—it simply existed around us.

Yet, despite being surrounded by it, I never imagined that fitness would one day become my life's work.

Like many fathers, mine would often encourage my brother to exercise, stay active, and build strength. I still remember him saying things like, "Start working out," or "Don't become lazy." Those conversations were usually directed towards my brother, never towards me.

At that time, it felt completely normal.

I was a naturally thin, active, energetic girl. Most people assumed I was healthy simply because I looked healthy. Nobody worried about my fitness. Nobody asked whether I was strong. Nobody discussed muscle mass, mobility, nutrition, or long-term health. Looking back, I realize that this was the reality for many girls of my generation.

The focus was often on whether a girl looked fine, not whether she was physically capable and resilient.

Ironically, I was one of the most physically active children around.

I participated enthusiastically in every sport or activity available to me. Running races, long jump, high jump, javelin throw, relay races, fun events—if there was a competition, I wanted to be part of it. During my

school years, I earned the Best Athlete Award and won numerous medals in athletics and sports competitions.

Physical activity was never a task for me.

It was joy.

It was freedom.

It was simply who I was.

In fact, there were times when my parents had to stop me from playing because I would spend so much time outdoors.

What I lacked, however, was not activity—it was awareness.

I had no real understanding of fitness, nutrition, recovery, strength training, or preventive health. Like many children of that era, I was naturally active and naturally healthy, without consciously thinking about wellness.

Alongside sports, academics remained my primary focus.

I consistently ranked among the top students in my class and developed a deep love for science and learning. This passion eventually guided my educational journey.

I completed my Bachelor's degree (B.Sc.) with Zoology, Botany, and Computer Applications from Mata Gujri College, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab. I then pursued Master's degree (M.Sc) in Human Genetics from the Department of Human Biology at Punjabi University, Patiala.

My fascination with life sciences continued, leading me to complete an M.Phil. in Zoology. To have a strong foundation in teaching I did B.Ed from Lincoln College of Education, Sirhind. Later, I pursued a Master's degree in Education, from Pine Grove College of Education, Bassi Pathana where I once again secured a top position in my course.

At the time, I believed my future would revolve around education and academics.

Life, however, had other plans.

After marriage, I embraced another important role—that of an Army officer's wife.

Like many military families, frequent relocations became a regular part of life. Over the years, I worked in different educational institutions, serving as a biology teacher, lecturer, and eventually as the principal of brigade school. Teaching was fulfilling, and I enjoyed contributing to the growth and development of young minds.

Yet beneath the surface, another journey was unfolding.

Motherhood brought immense joy into my life, but it also brought challenges that I had never anticipated.

I underwent two cesarean deliveries and an additional diagnostic abdominal surgery. The years that followed were physically demanding. I experienced significant weight gain, reduced mobility, persistent health concerns, and degenerative spinal issues. Everyday movement became difficult. My body no longer felt

like the body I once knew.

For perhaps the first time in my life, I felt disconnected from my own physical well-being.

That period became the turning point of my life.

Fitness did not begin for me as a passion.

It began as survival.

I did not start exercising to achieve a particular body shape or to appear a certain way. I started because I wanted to move without pain. I wanted my strength back. I wanted my health back. I wanted to feel capable again.

Those first steps were small.

Simple movements.

Basic exercises.

Tiny victories that most people would never notice.

But those small victories slowly transformed into bigger ones.

My educational background in genetics, physiology, anatomy, biology, and human health gave me a scientific understanding of the body. More importantly, it gave me confidence that change was possible.

With persistence, support from my family, and a willingness to learn, I began rebuilding myself.

One person who played a particularly important role during this phase was my brother.

He often encouraged me by saying, “You have gained so much knowledge through your own journey. You have transformed yourself. Why don’t you help others do the same?”

At first, I dismissed the idea.

But the thought stayed with me.

Eventually, I realized that my experiences, combined with my academic background, could genuinely help people.

That realization led to the birth of my wellness venture, VTL – Vigour Transforming Lives, registered under the Shops and Establishment Act in Punjab, in which my Co-Sister helped and encouraged me being an HR professional herself.

Because of our mobile military lifestyle, I chose to build my practice online. What initially seemed like a limitation soon became an opportunity. The online platform allowed me to connect with individuals from different cities, backgrounds, and age groups.

To strengthen my professional foundation, I pursued further qualifications, including an Executive Diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics from IGMPI (Institute of goods and manufacturing practices of India) certification in Wellness Coaching from Apollo Life, and certification as a Fitness Trainer from VSkills.

Over time, my approach evolved into a comprehensive wellness model.

I did not want to offer quick fixes.

I wanted to create sustainable transformation.

My Wholesome wellness plans combined nutrition, lifestyle modification, exercise, habit formation, body analysis, and practical strategies that could be implemented in real life.

As I worked with more individuals, I began seeing recurring patterns.

Women struggling with PCOS (officially renamed as PMOS: Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome)

Women managing thyroid disorders.

Women battling obesity, diabetes, cholesterol, hormonal imbalances, stress, and lifestyle-related conditions.

Women who had spent years caring for everyone else while neglecting themselves.

In many ways, I saw reflections of my own journey in them.

And perhaps that is why our connection was so strong.

I was not teaching from theory alone.

I was teaching from experience.

The same challenges that had once tested me had become the foundation of my purpose.

What followed was something I could never have predicted.

The confidence I gained through fitness extended far beyond physical health.

It changed the way I viewed myself.

It encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone.

It gave me the courage to dream bigger.

That confidence led me to participate in national and international beauty pageants. I was honoured as Mrs. India Runner-Up and later crowned Mrs. Asia Pacific Ocean Queen 2021.

Fitness had not merely transformed my body.

It had transformed my identity.

My journey into content creation and public engagement opened even more doors. I was selected among the Top 25 content creators from India for the inaugural fellowship programme by NAS academy Singapore. I learned to create meaningful content, I collaborated as influencer with leading national and international brands, expanded my influence, built a strong online community, got associated with Fit India Movement as Fit India Champion and Fitness Ambassador and discovered new opportunities to educate and inspire people through digital platforms and I am blessed to be awarded as one of 40 fittest business leaders of our country by BWBusinessworld.

Looking back, I often realize that none of this was part of a carefully designed plan.

I did not begin with a vision of becoming a fitness professional, influencer, entrepreneur, or ambassador.

I simply began by trying to heal myself.

And sometimes, that is how purpose finds us.

What started as survival became strength.

What started as recovery became service.

What started as a personal journey became a mission to help others discover the power that already exists within them.

This book is an extension of that mission.

"I did not find fitness. Fitness found me when I needed it the most."

Chapter 2

What Fitness Really Means

“Fitness is not immunity from life’s challenges. Fitness is resilience in the face of them”

Mention the word “fitness,” and most people immediately picture a certain type of body.

Some imagine six-pack abs.

Some think of bodybuilders lifting heavy weights.

Others visualize a lean waistline, visible muscles, or a specific number on the weighing scale.

Over the years, fitness has become closely associated with appearance. Social media, advertisements, and popular culture have often reduced it to a visual outcome—a body that looks fit according to society’s standards.

But fitness is much more than aesthetics.

In fact, one of the greatest misconceptions of our time is believing that fitness can be judged solely by appearance.

A person may look slim and still suffer from poor mobility, weak muscles, nutritional deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, chronic fatigue, anxiety, or metabolic disorders.

Similarly, an individual may not fit society's ideal body image and yet possess excellent stamina, strength, cardiovascular health, resilience, and overall well-being.

To understand fitness, we must first understand health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as:

"A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

This definition is remarkably powerful because it shifts our focus away from illness alone. Health is not simply about not being sick. It is about thriving physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.

Fitness is one of the most important pathways through which we achieve that state of well-being.

Fitness is not a destination. It is a state of readiness.

It is the ability of the body and mind to perform daily activities efficiently, recover from challenges, adapt to changing circumstances, and continue functioning with strength, energy, and vitality.

True fitness is not measured by how you look in a photograph. It is measured by how well your body serves you throughout life.

Can you walk comfortably?

Can you climb stairs without excessive fatigue?

Can you carry groceries, play with your children, travel, work, and enjoy life without being limited by your body?

Can you recover from illness, stress, setbacks, and physical demands?

Can your body support the life you want to live?

If the answer is yes, you are moving toward true fitness.

Fitness is not one-dimensional. It is a combination of several interconnected components. The components you can't fake with any sort of filters in real life.

Physical Fitness

This includes strength, endurance, flexibility, balance, coordination, agility, and cardiovascular efficiency.

Physically fit persons are not necessarily the strongest or the fastest. Rather, they possess the ability to meet the demands of everyday life without excessive strain or exhaustion.

Metabolic Fitness

Our body is constantly performing thousands of biochemical processes to keep us alive. Healthy blood sugar regulation, healthy cholesterol levels, hormonal balance, efficient energy production, and proper nutrient utilization are all indicators of metabolic fitness.

A person may appear fit externally while silently struggling with metabolic dysfunction.

This is why fitness must always be evaluated beyond appearance.

Musculoskeletal Fitness

Strong muscles, healthy joints, stable posture, adequate mobility, and strong bones are essential for long-term health. As we age, preserving muscle mass and mobility becomes one of the most important factors determining independence and quality of life. Fitness is not about building muscles for appearance alone. It is about preserving the ability to move freely and confidently throughout life. Muscles act a line of defence for skeleton and play an important role as metabolic machinery, as I call it.

Cardiovascular Fitness

The heart is one of the hardest-working organs in the body. A fit cardiovascular system improves endurance, circulation, oxygen delivery, and overall energy levels. Walking, running, cycling, swimming, dancing, sports, and many other forms of movement contribute significantly to cardiovascular health.

Mental and Emotional Fitness

Perhaps the most overlooked dimension of fitness is mental well-being. Exercise has been shown to support mood regulation, stress management, cognitive performance, self-confidence, and emotional resilience. A healthy body and a healthy mind are not

separate entities. They continuously influence one another. Fitness is not merely about training muscles. It is also about strengthening our ability to cope with life's challenges.

Immune Fitness

Our immune system serves as the body's defense mechanism. Adequate nutrition, regular physical activity, quality sleep, stress management, and healthy lifestyle habits all contribute to a stronger and more efficient immune response. True fitness enhances our ability to recover, heal, and adapt.

Functional Fitness

For me, this is one of the most practical definitions of fitness. Functional fitness means having the strength, mobility, stability and endurance required for real-life activities. Can you sit on the floor and get up comfortably? Can you lift luggage without injury? Can you play with your children? Can you remain independent as you grow older? Can you perform daily tasks with confidence?

These are often far more meaningful indicators of fitness than any number on a weighing scale. Fitness is not about becoming someone else. It is about becoming the strongest, healthiest, and most capable version of yourself.

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is function, vitality and longevity.

Most importantly, the goal is freedom—the freedom to live your life without unnecessary physical limitations. When we begin to view fitness through the lens of functional aspects, the conversation changes completely.

Fitness stops being about shrinking the body. It starts becoming about expanding our capabilities.

It stops being about chasing an ideal image. It starts becoming about building a better life.

And that is where real transformation begins.

One of the most common misconceptions about fitness is that a fit person should never fall sick, get injured, or develop a health condition. We often hear comments such as, *“But you are so fit, how did you get sick?”* or *“You exercise regularly; how could this happen to you?”*

The truth is that fitness does not make us invincible. Being fit does not guarantee a life free from infections, injuries, surgeries, accidents, genetic predispositions or unforeseen health challenges.

What fitness does provide is resilience.

A physically and metabolically healthy body is often better equipped to withstand stress, respond to illness, recover from injury, and regain function after setbacks. Fitness strengthens our reserve capacity—the body’s ability to adapt, heal and bounce back. Therefore, the true measure of fitness is not whether adversity ever strikes. The true measure of fitness is how effectively the body and mind recover when it does. Fitness is not

immunity from life's challenges. Fitness is resilience in the face of them.

Lifestyle Disorders in India: The Growing Challenge

India has made remarkable progress in healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, and life expectancy. Yet alongside these achievements, the country is facing a rapid rise in lifestyle-related diseases, also known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases account for approximately **66% of all deaths in India**, with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases being the leading contributors.

Diabetes

India is often referred to as the “diabetes capital” of the world due to the sheer number of affected individuals.

The Indian Council of Medical Research–INDIAB study published in 2023 estimated that:

- Approximately **101 million Indians are living with diabetes**.
- Around **136 million people are pre-diabetic**, meaning they are at high risk of developing diabetes in the future.

This equates to approximately 11.4% of India's adult population living with diabetes and 15.3% with prediabetes. Urban areas have the highest burden

with diabetes rates hovering around 30% among middle aged populations. However rural areas are also witnessing a rapid surge due to changing lifestyles. One more concerning revelation is that only about 60% of the adults living with diabetes are aware of their condition.

Hypertension

The same national study estimated:

- About **315 million Indians have hypertension (high blood pressure)** which accounts to 35.5% of Indian adults.

Hypertension is often called a “silent killer” because many individuals remain unaware they have it until complications develop.

Obesity and Overweight

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reported a substantial increase in overweight and obesity among adults.

Among adults aged 15–49 years:

- Approximately **24% of women** are overweight or obese.
- Approximately **23% of men** are overweight or obese.

These figures have risen significantly compared to previous surveys.

Abdominal Obesity

The ICMR-INDIAB study found that:

- Nearly **40% of Indian adults have abdominal obesity.**

Abdominal or central obesity is strongly associated with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome.

Physical Inactivity

According to national and international assessments, a large proportion of Indians do not meet recommended physical activity levels, despite growing awareness about exercise and wellness. Sedentary lifestyles, desk-based occupations, excessive screen time, and reduced daily movement continue to contribute significantly to lifestyle disorders.

"The challenge before us is no longer a lack of information. We know that movement matters. We know that nutrition matters. We know that sleep, stress management, and exercise matter. The challenge is translating knowledge into daily action. Lifestyle disorders are not merely diseases of the body; they are often the cumulative result of the lifestyles we live every day."

The Missing Link: Why Lifestyle Disorders Continue to Rise

If fitness awareness is increasing, why are lifestyle disorders increasing as well? This is a question worth asking.

Today, we live in a time when health and fitness have become part of mainstream conversation. Governments, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, fitness communities, and countless professionals are working tirelessly to promote healthier lifestyles.

Across our cities and towns, we see parks, walking tracks, cycling routes, community sports facilities, yoga centres, and open-air gyms. Public health campaigns encourage physical activity and healthy living. Schools are increasingly incorporating fitness programs. Social media is flooded with fitness content. More people than ever before are participating in walking groups, yoga sessions, marathons, cycling events, and recreational sports.

At first glance, it appears that we are moving in the right direction.

Yet a concerning reality exists alongside this progress.

- Lifestyle disorders continue to rise.
- Obesity is increasing.
- Type 2 diabetes is increasing.
- Hypertension is increasing.
- Fatty liver disease is increasing.
- Metabolic syndrome is increasing.
- Joint problems, mobility limitations, and age-related frailty are appearing earlier than ever before.

Why?

The answer is not that people are doing the wrong things.

Walking, Yoga, Cycling, Swimming, Sports, Running; everything is beneficial.

Every form of movement contributes positively to health. The problem is not what people are doing. The problem is what many people are not doing. There is a missing link in the modern fitness conversation.

That missing link is **strength**.

For decades, strength training was viewed as something reserved for athletes, bodybuilders, weightlifters, or young men trying to build muscles. Many women avoided it because they feared becoming “too muscular.” Many older adults avoided it because they assumed it was unsafe. Many others simply believed that walking alone was sufficient. As a result, an entire generation learned to value movement while overlooking one of the most important organs of health—the skeletal muscle system. Most people think of muscles as cosmetic structures. In reality, muscles are metabolic organs. They are among the most powerful regulators of human health.

- When we talk about metabolism, energy production, blood sugar regulation, insulin sensitivity, mobility, balance, immunity and healthy ageing, muscles sit at the centre of the discussion. Every movement we perform depends upon muscle tissue. Every step we

take depends upon muscle tissue. Every time we climb stairs, lift an object, maintain posture, or recover from illness, muscles are working behind the scenes. At a cellular level, muscles contain thousands of mitochondria—the microscopic energy-producing structures often referred to as the “powerhouses” of the cell. These mitochondria help convert nutrients into usable energy. The healthier and more active our muscles are, the more efficiently our bodies can produce and utilize energy. Muscle tissue also acts as a major storage site for glucose. When muscle mass is healthy, the body becomes more efficient at regulating blood sugar levels. This is one of the reasons why strength training plays such a significant role in reducing the risk of insulin resistance and Type 2 diabetes.

Healthy muscles:

- Improve metabolic flexibility.
- Improve insulin sensitivity.
- Balance hormonal health.
- Improve bone density.
- protect joints.
- enhance balance and mobility.
- support longevity.

In many ways, muscle is the body’s insurance policy giving returns in old age and during health setbacks.

Unfortunately, muscle mass naturally declines with age if it is not actively maintained. This gradual loss of muscle tissue, known as sarcopenia, begins much earlier than most people realize and accelerates with inactivity, poor nutrition, illness, and ageing. When muscle mass decreases, the consequences extend far beyond physical appearance.

Strength declines.

Mobility declines.

Metabolic health declines.

The risk of falls and injuries increases.

Recovery becomes slower.

Daily activities become more challenging.

This is why two people of the same age may experience ageing very differently. One individual remains energetic, independent, and active well into later decades of life. The other struggles with weakness, fatigue, poor balance, and chronic disease. The difference often lies not merely in body weight but in muscle quality and muscle quantity. This is where strength training becomes indispensable. Strength training does not require expensive equipment. It does not require a commercial gym membership. It does not require lifting extremely heavy weights. Resistance bands, light dumbbells, bodyweight exercises, household objects, and structured movement patterns can all help stimulate muscle growth and maintenance.

The goal is not to become a bodybuilder.

The goal is to become stronger than yesterday.

The goal is to preserve function.

The goal is to preserve independence.

The goal is to build a body that continues to serve us throughout life.

Walking improves cardiovascular health. Yoga improves flexibility, mobility, balance, and mind-body connection. Sports improve coordination and endurance. But strength training provides the foundation that supports all of them. Have you ever seen any sports person excelling in that particular sport without strength training? It is the missing piece that completes the fitness puzzle. If we truly wish to create a healthier society, reduce lifestyle disorders, and improve quality of life across all age groups, strength training must become as common and accepted as walking and yoga. Because fitness is not merely about adding years to life. It is about adding life to those years.

The ultimate goal is not simply to live longer. The ultimate goal is to live stronger.