

## SIX MEDALS OVER ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE CRORE INDIANS!

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Vaidehi Gokhe\*

### ABSTRACT

*Through this article, the author wants to bring to light the condition of sports in India. India is a diverse and developing country with skills and a mass of talent that needs to be recognized with time. The challenges faced by the athletes and players at different stages of their sports career include the expenses, lack of equipment, lack of knowledge, and lack of Government support. Proper regulation of the rules in regard to sports and establishment of statutes is a current need of the nation in this field. The author would like to bring out the lapses and suggest the improvement thereof.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Opportunity, Deception, Talent, Government Support.

### INTRODUCTION

India is the most populated country in the world. It is diverse in its culture. Though being the most populated country, it does not secure its spot in the top 10 countries with maximum medals in the Olympics. In the recent Summer Olympics, India won only 6 medals, one silver and 5 bronze over the population of 141.73 crore. Not only this year but the proportion is observed to be the same from so many Olympics in the past. The government spent approximately 470 crore in this event held in Paris out of which it could earn only 6 medals.<sup>1</sup> Nothing can be more disgraceful for this country. This is not because it lacks talent but because it lacks knowledge, effort, discipline, and good governance. There are various factors responsible for this which include political activities as well. Across 198 countries, 206 NOCs send their best players to demonstrate their skills and bring medals back home. India does not lack talent but it does not have the tools to dig a well to treasure which can be done with the help of proper regulation of sports activities by the government.

### SCENARIO IN SCHOOLS

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\*BA LLB, THIRD YEAR, RTMNU'S DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR COLLEGE, NAGPUR.

<sup>1</sup> PTI, 'All that glitters is Gold: Athletics biggest gainer in govt funding for Paris Olympics preparations', The Economic Times, (15 July 2024) <<https://m.economictimes.com/news/sports/all-that-glitters-is-gold-athletics-biggest-gainer-in-govt-funding-for-paris-olympics-preparations/articleshow/111753310.cms>>

In India, everything starts with school. The first step towards any path initiates from the school. From developing a child's interest in sports to making him excellently good at it, it all starts with the school. All the games authorized by the Olympic Association are included in the school games. There are a lot of various games played throughout India which are also played in the Olympics. Lately, it has been observed that except for some games, most of those games are not even introduced in schools. Even the sports teacher does not know the games played at the school level. Thus he only promotes the game he has an interest in or he is originally a player of that game. Only such a game is brought and taught in that school. For instance, say, a certain sports teacher is an original football player then he will promote football. If he is a basketball player then he will promote basketball. Similarly, if he is a swimmer then that school will produce only swimmers. Many of the sports teachers are not aware of the games played in the Olympics and not even the basic games. The entries are sent in the school-level games and the children are told how to play but the teacher himself doesn't know anything about it. There is neither a training session nor any practice session arranged by the school. This happens in almost every school in the country. However, if some extraordinary kid performs exceptionally well and completes the journey from local to national level without any training or practice and enters the arena of international sports he gets eliminated in the first round. This is because the athletes or players from other countries are trained specially in that particular sport and long-term training is provided to them with the most updated equipment while the government provides economic support at each step.

Now let's talk about the games which are played in India for a very long time such as hockey, table tennis, badminton swimming, athletics, etc. The government invests in crores in these games so that players of our country perform and win at an international tournament. The main source of sports in an Indian household is either school or the parents. If parents are interested in any game then they encourage their children to play and learn that game because they already know about it and have little or lot knowledge about it. Thus, in such games, we can see a lot of competition.

### **OBSESSION OF INDIANS WITH CRICKET**

Indian culture has a unique place for cricket. It has made its significance with time. The British, during their colonial period, introduced cricket to India. It became a means for Indians to participate and excel in games traditionally associated with the ruling class. It became a source of pride and a way to challenge colonial superiority. It became a tool for

fostering national unity. Even after independence, it was the most played game in the country. Cricket gained more attention in India with the introduction of television and the Internet. This commercialization has made cricket more accessible and popular across all sections of society. The entire country unites and treasures the time when our national team performs. Whatever time of the day it may be, they take time out of their busy life just to watch a cricket match. There are a lot of sports being broadcasted on the television but only cricket is watched widely. The daily life of a typical Indian household starts with a cricket match. People right from their childhood see cricket all over and thus develop an interest in that field. A person who has only seen cricket thinks that sports means cricket. The media coverage of this event is so wide that it puts a veil on other events. Other sports and games do not get the importance given to cricket in India. It is due to various factors such as cricket generating a massive source of income and opportunity to various sponsorships. Another thing is that it can be played in any space. It doesn't always require a big stadium whereas other games need appropriate places to play such as a swimming pool for swimming, a court for badminton, tennis, and basketball, a field for javelin and shot-put, a fighting ring for boxing, etc. If there is no proper arrangement of stadiums the practice cannot be conducted. This is one of the reasons why people neglect other games and choose cricket over anything else. Even today it is the most played game throughout the nation.

### **DECEPTIVE COACHING**

As it can be observed sport has become a subject of prestige for a last section of society. Whenever someone steps out of the house they can see at least one person going for a practice session of any sport. Thus everyone desires for their children to play at least one sport either for fitness or to maintain a status in society. Playing any game just for fun or fitness and playing a game as a passion are two different things that vary a lot. One cannot conquer any field without proper training and coaching. That is why coaches play a vital role in shaping an ordinary person into a player. The unemployed people having little or no knowledge about a game have a very good knowledge about the psychology of parents these days. They gather the opportunity to earn oh handsome amount by coaching. An unemployed person on an open field or hiring some infrastructure to establish an academy for a particular game with almost no knowledge. As parents do not know the game do not know this internal scenario. Such coaches to just earn money deceive and exploit the parents by misguiding them. This not only makes the parents think that the game is expensive but also that it does

not give any output. They not only become the ATM of coaches but also play with the future of the children at a very crucial moment of their lives. In the crowd, there may be a child with actual talent who has the potential to play well and play for his country but due to such deceptive measures he is deprived of the opportunity and his talent gets buried there.

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY PLAYERS**

### **Expensive Equipment**

There are various challenges faced by players in their careers. One of which is expensive sports equipment. These things are getting expensive day by day which is not feasible in a middle-class family. They think that there is no career in sports thus no point in investing so much. Also, excellence in sports does not give you employment to run the house. Therefore a middle-class family sees sports only as a means of fitness. For a rich family sports and games are just for entertainment purposes. They can provide anything to their children that they desire. Hence talent is not given importance there. A poor family cannot afford expensive equipment for practice and without practice, there is no scope thus the talent is buried where it starts.

### **Biased Selection**

There is no transparency in the selection process of athletes. Biased selection leads to the exploitation of a good player. A player spends the best time of his life sweating and working hard on the field so that he can lift himself from state to national and national to international level. In between the brother and nephew dispute the selecting committee is bound over their limits and selects the one they would benefit from or have any personal interest in as a relative of any member. For this reason, people who have real talent are exploited for their spot and are not selected. Another reason is that the government does not let the committees operate at their full potential. Where there is a need for 15-20 players only 10 are selected. Even those who have the potential to bring medals back home are rejected for irrelevant reasons and are deprived of the opportunity. And thus the international performance goes down gradually.

### **Sponsorship**

Right from the beginning every expense in this field has to be covered by the parents. Sports

is nothing that comes free of cost. It puts you in a position to invest something in it. Not every sport is expensive but some require an amount of investment. For example, athletics is the cheapest event of sports which does not require any equipment or requires less equipment. In athletics, various such events do require a little investment such as shot-put, Javelin, pole vault, etc. For badminton, you require racket shuttles shoes, etc., for ice hockey you require an ice ring, hockey stick, skates, etc., and many more. All these expenses are to be taken by the players themselves. Rifle shooting is one of the most expensive games played globally and in India only a person from a well-off family can afford to participate and excel in that game. When one reaches in national level they get sponsorship for all the equipment required by them to perform. But this is seen only for a few sports such as cricket, football, badminton, swimming, etc. Many people in India cannot afford to invest this much in sports so they look out for sponsors but sponsors are only interested in cricket because it gives them back a lot of money and therefore other games are neglected. Hence participation in other games is seen much less as compared to cricket.

### Qualification

Qualification is one of the most important stages to step up in the international arena. There are certain rules and limits for a person to qualify for any tournament played at an international level. Let's say for the Olympics, each NOC is allowed to send at least one player for the qualification in every event. The qualification requires a minimum level of performance to be achieved to obtain a place. Which is obtained by participating in a series of tournaments before the final qualification is made.<sup>2</sup> For example, in badminton, there are a total of 16 places per NOC across all 5 events i.e. men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles. All players have to get themselves on the rise to the Paris ranking list which includes the series of tournaments for qualification that is the Thomas and Uber Cup, Sudirman Cup, world championships, continental championships, continental multisport games, grade 2 and 3 BWF tournaments, and any other international event sanctioned by BWF. All these tournaments conclude the ranking and anyone who has been ranked in the top 16 is selected to play in the Olympics.<sup>3</sup> Recently in the Paris Olympics

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<sup>2</sup> IOC, 'Games of XXXIII Olympiad Paris 2024 – Qualification System Principles', (16-18 October 2021) <<https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/News/2021/10/2021-10-08-Qualification-System-Principles-Paris-2024.pdf>> accessed 27 June 2022

<sup>3</sup> BWF, 'Qualification System – Games of XXXIII Olympiad - Paris 2024', (11 May 2023) <<https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Olympic-Games/Paris-2024/Paris2024-QS-Badminton.pdf>> accessed 11 May 2023

2024, Indian players participated in only four of five events in badminton. It happens in most of the events that not all players get qualified. In other games such as equestrian only one Indian participant was qualified. Similarly, in table tennis, two players were qualified. Summarizing all the events India participated in only 16 out of 32 events organized in the Summer Olympics 2024. People in India do not even know about the 82 games recognized by the International Olympic Association. This reduces the chances of winning medals as the first step to grabbing a medal starts with participation and qualification.

## **SPORTS LAW IN INDIA**

There is no specific legislation regarding sports law in India. The national sports policy was first established in India in 1984 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. It was updated in 2001 and more recently in 2011 to expand the overall objectives. The key aspects of this policy are improving India's stand in international sports competitions like the Olympics, making sports more accessible to all segments of society, upgrading sports infrastructure across the country by building more playfield stadiums and academies, supporting sports person by providing them with the best possible infrastructure, promote participation and sports like soccer hockey cricket tennis boxing wrestling, etc., improve employment prospects of sports person by providing government jobs and promoting employment in the private sector, regulates sports agents association and other sport related entities to prevent exploitation of athletes, and corrupt doping match-fixing and other ill afflicting sports in India. India has several major organizations that govern and regulate sports such as the Sports Authority of India and the Indian Olympic Association. The policy is made with the best characteristics but it is not followed or regulated fairly. It has been almost 40 years since the policy was established yet India's stand in international sport has not developed. Sports is not accessible to all segments of society only the one with a golden spoon can participate in most of the games. Infrastructure and playing fields are not sufficient. There is no promotion of participation in other sports except cricket. Employment of a sports person is not secured, sports agents associations, and other sports-related entities and not regulated properly while the athletes are being exploited by the relatives or friends of the authority. And most important a lot of people are deprived of the opportunity to show their talent and skills.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Vijay Pal Dalmia, 'Sports laws in India', (12 November 2023) <<https://www.mondaq.com/india/sport/1386912/sports-law-in-india#:~:text=The%20National%20Sports%20Policy%20was,to%20expand%20the%20overall%20objectives.>>

## SUGGESTIONS

All the issues have just one solution which is reforming the present rules and loss governing the sports facility. If government takes everything under its control it may help in numerous ways. The parents are players who are insecure about the career opportunities that they get through sports. If the players playing at the National level are provided with the opportunity to coach then it can generate employment as well as it will provide quality coaching to the upcoming players. This will eliminate the chances of deceptive coaching and misleading. It will clear a path for people with talent and not with political support. Also, private coaches can be employed through the government in their program according to their merit and qualifications. The government already spends a large amount on the development of sports therefore it can if it manages build a great infrastructure at National and state levels. There is already a program set by the sports authority of India named Khelo India for upcoming athletes but it is not governed properly. Various malpractices are going on internally. The government can make a program to train children from age 6 to 18 in various sports and give them a chance to develop their skills accordingly while providing them with all the types of equipment required. Further, it can also be divided into three categories basic, advanced, and excellent. Those 12 years can be utilized to develop skills and promote the players according to their improvement from basic to excellent to advanced. And if someone is not able to keep up and does not show results then he can be cut out once he is 18 years old. But it still does not close its path. The government can also train him for 2 more years not to become a player but to become a coach. This will not only give the players an excellent coach but also an experienced one. The practices that the coaches nowadays are doing just to earn money will be dissolved. The government regulating every activity will reduce the burden on parents of expenses incurred on sports. More and more people will take interest even in the most expensive game when it is properly funded by the government. People will not think of sports just as a means of fitness but as an opportunity to make a career in it. It will also ensure their jobs even if they choose sports faculty. The facilities provided by the government will attract many people and where there is competition between 100 people there will be competition between 600 people. This will get the cream out and maximize the chances of winning a medal in the Olympics. The importance of sports will increase not only in cricket but all the other sports that fall behind because the funding or facilities will be uplifted and more people will show interest in these sports. It will bring a good revolution in the history of sports in India and we will be able to stand on the same level as China and USA today.

## CONCLUSION

It's a great honor to stand and see our national flag rise high while singing the national anthem. It is the most important movement for any Indian to see its nation proudly. The world is a very small place, things always go around. Sport is part of a human being's daily life. Whenever look around there is always something related to it. Therefore it is important to make it a symbol of national Pride. By observing society sport is treated just as a physical activity to release stress but it can all change if the government overcomes this issue. Sports starts with school which is the problem in our country that sport is treated as a private matter. In other countries such as China and Japan, sport is part of their academic activity. Everything is taken care of by the school and parents do not have to do anything. It is the school's responsibility to shape the future of the children. But by looking at the Indian scenario it is not possible as the schools their locality and family background matter a lot. The ill practices of outside coaches can also not be controlled by the schools. It can be achieved only by the government taking over this responsibility and lifting the status of this country from developing to a developed country.

