

**WEEKLY
FOCUS**

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VISION IAS
INSPIRING INNOVATION

Sports in India:
**Olympics
and beyond**





Introduction



7 medals- 1 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze. This was India's medal tally from the recently held 2020 Summer Olympics. With this medal tally, India was ranked 48th among the competing nations, the highest rank attained by India in the last four decades. Viewing this in the context of our population and participation, the performance seems underwhelming relative to comparable nations.

Who is responsible for this underwhelming performance? The athletes, our sporting facilities, or our gene pool? The performance at any sporting event goes beyond the individual efforts, external support, or the genetic makeup. These performances are often the reflection of value of sports, their place in our culture and most importantly of the joy of playing.

But how does this culture translate to performance? To understand this linkage and inculcate it, we first need to answer- what importance does sports hold in our life and in society? How has India's sporting journey evolved over the years? What are the reasons for India's poor performance? What steps have been taken to improve the sporting ecosystem in the country? And what can be done to embed sports in the fabric of Indian Culture?

What importance does sports hold in an individual's life and in society?



- ❖ **Develops character and integrity:** Engagement in sports helps develop values such as team spirit, sense of fair play, grit, resilience, hard work, and self-discipline. Sportsmanship is used as a synonym for showcasing honesty and respect on the field of play.
- ❖ **Creates an active society:** Sports incite great passion that can be channelized to bring together people in the form of events, community engagements, competitions among others. A habit of engaging in and encouraging sports can enhance the physical and social activity levels in a society.
 - For example, research shows that people from communities which attach higher importance to sports tend to be fitter and more physically active than other communities.
- ❖ **A platform for equality and inclusion:** Sports can bring together people from diverse class, caste, race, gender, and abilities. From acting as an agent of women empowerment to platform for promoting equality among different races and castes, participation in sports opens the door for people who are deprived of opportunities in other areas.
 - Many NGOs have been using sports as a vehicle for social change in rural India. For e.g., Mumbai based Oscar Foundation.
- ❖ **Building culture and heritage:** Sporting events, icons and legends become a part of collective memory and hence cultural heritage of a region, e.g., Wrestling in Haryana and Kalaripayattu in Kerala.





- ❖ **Empowers youth and brings out the sense of leadership:** By playing sports one develops management skills, negotiation skills, communication skills, convincing skills, conflict management and confidence all in real-time, in a natural peer driven ecosystem and in a playful manner.
 - A corollary of development of these skills is emergence of leaders among youth who naturally cross over to public life, board rooms, and in the social life around them.
- ❖ **Role in other aspects of life:** Sports does not exist in isolation, but plays a crucial role in other facets of life–
 - **Generates economic activity** in the field of manufacturing of sports equipment.
 - **Acts a platform to advocate socially significant issues** such as Black Lives Matter movement.
 - **Used as a tool for diplomacy** via. **Sports diplomacy**, to influence diplomatic, social, and political relations. For example, Cricket diplomacy is often used as a variable in India-Pakistan relations.
 - **Invigorates the feelings of nationalism at international sporting events and encourages peace and development globally** by bringing people together through initiatives like the Olympic Truce Movement.



Chaturanga is an Indian two-player strategic board game first known from the Gupta Empire around the 6th century CE. The Arabians adapted it to a game they called Shatranj, which was later embraced by the Europeans during the Medieval Period and, after a few modifications, is now known as chess. Chaturanga, roughly translates to "four limbs" from Sanskrit, an allusion to those divisions, which were infantry, elephantry, cavalry, and chariots.

Olympic Games: The embodiment of sporting spirit



Events like Olympics act as a global stage to celebrate the sport and showcase one's ability and skill to the world. Olympic games encourage practice of values like Integrity, Sustainability, Peace and Development, Equality, Inclusion and Solidarity. This is reflected in its various programs like–

- **IOC Young Leaders Programme:** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Young Leaders programme, launched in 2016, empowers talents to leverage the power of sport to make a positive difference in their communities.
- **Olympic Day:** Every year the IOC encourages everyone – regardless of age, gender, or athletic ability – to get active on 23 June.
- **IOC Refugee Olympic Team:** In 2015, IOC announced the creation of the Refugee Olympic Team – the first of its kind – to take part in the Olympic Games Rio 2016 as recognition to the burgeoning Global Refugee Crisis.
- **Olympic Solidarity:** Olympic Solidarity redistributes the share of the broadcast rights from the Olympic Games through programmes offered to all 206 National Olympic Committees. All Olympic Solidarity's programmes are aimed at developing and promoting sports worldwide and encouraging athletes' participation in the Olympic Games.





Vision

Building a better world through sport

Values

Excellence**Respect****Friendship**

Missions

- Ensure the uniqueness and the regular celebration of the Olympic Games
- Put athletes at the heart of the Olympic Movement
- Promote sport and the Olympic values in society, with a focus on young people



Working Principles

Universality and Solidarity

Unity in Diversity

Autonomy and Good Governance

Sustainability

How has India's sporting journey evolved over the years?



India has been a part of several international sporting events including hosting and co-hosting of major events like the 2003 Afro-Asian Games, the 2010 Hockey World Cup, the 2010 Commonwealth Games and the memorable 2011 Cricket World Cup.

Cricket has been one of the bright spots in India's sporting journey. Others include hockey in the past, badminton, and chess. This journey can be traced with following watersheds-

- ❌ **Participation in Olympics as a colony of British India:** India's first brush with the Olympics came at the 1900 Paris Olympics - where Norman Pritchard was the country's sole representative. He won two silver medals - in the 200m sprint and 200m hurdles. The first multi-sport Olympic contingent for India came at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics - where five athletes took part.
- ❌ **The hockey dominance:** Indian Hockey Team had 11 medals in Olympics comprising of 8 golds, 1 silver, and 2 bronze up till the Moscow Olympics of 1980. Since then, the team has not been able to win any medals. The Tokyo Olympics broke the shackles with Indian Hockey Team winning a bronze medal.
- ❌ **The medal drought and plateaued performance:** From 1956 Melbourne Olympics up till 2004 Athens Olympics, India had never been able to breach the single medal mark.
- ❌ **An inflection point- the Beijing Olympics:** The 2008 Beijing Olympics was a watershed moment in Indian Olympic history as shooter Abhinav Bindra claimed the nation's first individual gold in the 10m Air Rifle event.
 - ➔ Since then, the country has been consistently able to produce heroes like Boxer Vijender Singh, shuttler Saina Nehwal and P V Sindhu among others. Latest among them being India's first track-and-field gold by Neeraj Chopra.

India at the Olympics

Year	Medals
1900 Paris	2
1920 Antwerp	-
1924 Paris	-
1928 Amsterdam	1
1932 Los Angeles	1
1936 Berlin	1
1948 London	1
1952 Helsinki	2
1956 Melbourne	1
1960 Rome	1
1964 Tokyo	1
1968 Mexico City	1
1972 Munich	1
1976 Montreal	-
1980 Moscow	1
1984 Los Angeles	-
1988 Seoul	-
1992 Barcelona	-
1996 Atlanta	1
2000 Sydney	1
2004 Athens	1
2008 Beijing	3
2012 London	6
2016 Rio de Janeiro	2
2020 Tokyo	7



Overall, India has won 35 medals across 25 Olympics since first taking part at the 1900 Paris Games. Over these 122 years, the country has seen economic, technological, and geopolitical growth (especially post-independence) but this growth has not translated to improvement in sporting capability and performance.

India placed as a major player in some sports



In the recent times, India has emerged as a major player in some sports. These include-

- ❖ **Chess:** Chess has risen in popularity in India over the last few decades, primarily due to its star player Viswanathan Anand. The legacy is being carried forward by the child prodigy Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa.
- ❖ **Badminton:** From Prakash Padukone in 1980 to P V Sindhu in 2019, the culture, popularity, participation, and the quality of players have grown tremendously for the sport. This can be seen with improved global rankings of Indian shuttlers (Saina Nehwal attained the World no. 1 spot in April 2015).
- ❖ **Kabaddi:** India has won gold in all the Asian Games in kabaddi except the 2018 Asian Games where they got bronze. India also won the Kabaddi World Championship in 2007.



Why has India's performance in sports been sub-optimal so far?



To become a high performing sportsperson in India, one has to cross a significant number of hurdles throughout their sporting journey:

❖ Hurdles to generation of interest in sports-

- **Not a part of mainstream education:** Sports training has always been outside the ambit of the mainstream education. Children at an early age are put in a dilemma about whether or not to compromise on their education for pursuing sports. This risk drives away a large pool of potential sportspersons.
 - A corollary of this issue is **talent identification issues**. Being outside the mainstream, talent identification processes are non-standardized, ad-hoc and are subject to individual bias, corruption among others.
- **Discrimination, malnutrition, and poverty:** Social barriers such as caste and gender-based discrimination and limited financial resources drive away a section of children away from sports.
 - The participation and the ability to perform gets further reduced when close to **2 in every 5 children are suffering from some form of malnutrition**.
- **Changing nature of society and social activities:** Increasing urbanization and digitization has reduced the avenues and interest of children to engage in physical activities and consequently in sports.
 - For instance, studies show that children born in 1990s are two times more likely to engage in sports when compared with children born in 2000s.



- **Limited interest of private sector in sports:** Popularity of sports and interest in sports like any other field is contingent upon its visibility in the surroundings. Limited private interest puts all the onus of generating this visibility either on the government machinery or the sportspersons themselves.
- ❖ **Hurdles in choosing sports as a profession-**
 - **Uncertainty about prospects:** Parents do not encourage their children to adopt a career in sports, perennially doubting if there is money for a sustainable lifestyle in sports or will their child languish in neglect once they are past the medal winning age.
 - Sports in India has a **hero or zero** syndrome i.e., a sportsperson in India gets recognition and financial security only when s/he competes at national or international level.
 - **Lack of awareness about importance and opportunities in sports:** For a large section of the population in India, sports end at cricket and hockey. There is limited awareness about the other sports, their events and the opportunities that exist therein.
 - For example, majority of the potential athletes are not aware about Shot Put as a potential game.
 - **Issues with school sports:** School sports act as a feeder to sports at the district, state, college, and professional level. But the active discouragement faced by students in terms of absence of adequate equipment or infrastructure and limited attention has rendered this mechanism dysfunctional.
 - For instance, across all states, less than 2 out of 10 schools had a dedicated physical education teacher.
- ❖ **Hurdles faced by sportspersons-**
 - **Poor utilization of the sporting infrastructure:** Contrary to the popular belief, India houses approximately 100 sports facilities fulfilling international standards of sports infrastructure, in addition to government-owned college and university grounds, community centres, and facilities owned by private entities. But these facilities are largely neglected in terms of utilization and maintenance and many a times used for purposes other than sports.
 - **Dearth of quality coaching staff:** There is an absence of quality coaching staff especially beyond Tier-I urban establishments, which results in potential athletes in such areas learning poor or obsolete techniques which technically handicaps them in the long run.
 - **Funding and expenditure issues:** The funding of sports in India (excluding cricket) largely comes from Union Government and thus is limited in nature. For instance, India, with a population of about 50 times of Australia, spends 14% less.
 - The problem gets compounded when actual expenditure is only a part of the allocated amount. For instance, the ₹428 crore expenditure under the flagship Khelo India scheme was just 42% of the budgeted ₹1,015 crore.
 - **Politicization of the sporting federations:** Many sports federations in India have become personal fiefdoms headed by politicians and businessmen, riddled with issues like factionalism and infighting. In such a scenario, professional and the systematic development of the sport takes a back seat.
 - **Other sports governance issues:** Except some sports like cricket, hockey, badminton, kabaddi etc., India does not have a clear and functional architecture of sporting federations and events. For example, a Delhi High Court appointed committee has cited that- "there is no one to manage Table Tennis Federation of India's (highest governing institution of Table Tennis in India) day-to-day affairs."



These issues collectively drive away children, societies, and communities from sports. With limited set of people engaging in sports, the presence of sports culture also remains limited. The perception of sports among the people in general can be expressed by the couplet-

'Kheloge koodoge toh hoge kharaab, Padhoge likhoge to banoge nawab' (All those who study thoroughly become a king and those who only play around get to go nowhere!)



What are the steps taken by India to improve the sporting ecosystem?



- ❖ **Strengthening sports in schools:** Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan supports sports in school by providing sporting equipment to schools, making sports education an integral part of the curriculum, and supporting 'Khelo India' scheme.
- ❖ **Major sports development schemes:**
 - **National Sports Development Fund** helps sportspersons excel by providing them opportunities to train under coaches of international repute with technical, scientific and psychological support and giving them exposure to international competitions.
 - **National Sports Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS)** for talent identification in the age group of 8-12 years and nurturing of identified talented sports persons.
 - **Other initiatives under Sports Authority of India (SAI):** such as SAI National Centres of Excellence, SAI Training centres schemes, Come and Play scheme etc.
- ❖ **Special Area Games Scheme:** Government of India through Sports Authority of India (SAI), is implementing Special Area Games (SAG) Scheme to identify sporting talent in the age of 10-18 years from the tribal, backward, and hilly areas of the country.
 - The scheme also helps to tap talent in Indigenous Games and Martial Arts and from the communities which are either genetically or geographically advantageous for excellence in a particular sports discipline.
- ❖ **Khelo India:** Aimed at mainstreaming sports as a tool for national development, economic development, community development, and individual development, the Khelo India scheme was launched in 2018 with 12 verticals.



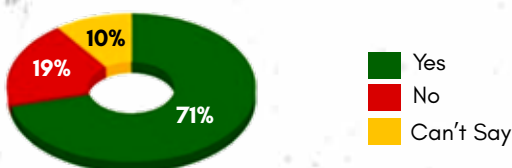
- ❖ **Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Sports in Eklavya Model Residential Schools:** These centres will have state-of-the-art facilities such as specialized training, boarding, and lodging facilities, sports kit, sports equipment, competition exposure, insurance, medical expenses etc. for one identified individual sport and one group sport in each state.
 - The facilities open up **sporting opportunities for rural and underprivileged section** of the population as most of these schools are residential and co-educational (i.e., opportunities exist for both boys and girls).
- ❖ **Recognition and motivation to athletes with awards and accolades:** Various sports awards are given at all levels i.e., district, state, and national level. Among them, the highest honors are given through National Sports Awards by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. These include–



- ❖ **The Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):** Government aims to provide financial assistance and other help to athletes in their pursuit of medals in the Olympics and other international sporting events. Sports such as Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Hockey, Shooting, and Wrestling have been recognized as 'high priority' sports under the scheme.
 - The impact of TOPS was best seen at the 2018 commonwealth games where 47 out of the 70 medals won by India were bagged by TOPS awardee athletes.
- ❖ **Looking beyond traditional areas:** Apart from traditional sports namely archery, boxing, shooting, badminton, wrestling, hockey, weightlifting and athletics, efforts are being made to develop sailing, table tennis, swimming, and rowing for 2028 Olympics and beyond.
- ❖ **Inclusion in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) list:** According to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs' database, CSR funding for sports has risen from about Rs 58 crore in FY15 to Rs 293 crore in FY20. This includes initiatives like the Young Champs and the Junior NBA programmes.
- ❖ **Declaration of sports as an industry:** Recently, Mizoram declared sport as an industry in a move to provide an impetus to the sector. This implies that the industrial policy of the state would now include sport within it, thereby making it available for availing of subsidy, loan and assistance from private and government sources.

Apart from these, several initiatives have been taken to improve fitness such as **Fit India Campaign** which indirectly complements sports. The acceleration in these efforts has been bearing fruit which can be seen in the result of Tokyo Olympics and how it is changing the perception of sports–

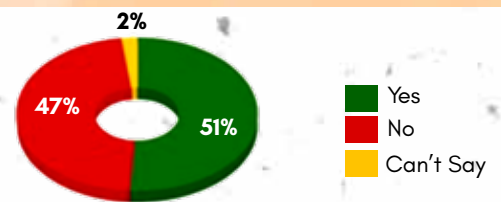
If a child/grandchild in your family was very interested in a sports outside of cricket, would you want them to take up as a career?



Responses - 8,348

71% Indian parents say if a child in the family was interested in a sport outside cricket, they would support them taking it as a career

Did you or someone in the family watch or closely track India's games in Tokyo Olympics?



Responses - 9,256

51% Indian families had 1 or more individuals watching or tracking Tokyo Olympics



Case Study: Haryana – The Incubator of Sport Stars from Rural India



A large share of the success of Tokyo Olympics and overall sports in India goes to Haryana. Haryana sent the maximum Olympians (Tokyo) in the Indian contingent – 31 athletes (nearly 25%) Three of them brought gold, silver, and bronze respectively and many were part of the victorious Indian hockey team.

Reasons behind Haryana's success:

- ❖ **Early Start:** In the 1980's, Haryana hired coaches for different sports across the State.
- ❖ **Formulation of a Sports Policy in 2006:** It focussed on spotting, nurturing, and polishing talent from the State for national and international events.
- ❖ **Consolidation of efforts:** The State formulated various tests, such as Sports and Physical Aptitude Test (SPAT) and Sports and Physical Exercise Evaluation and Development (SPEED) Test to aid the complete process from identification to training, which have been now consolidated into a formal institutional mechanism called 'Play 4 India'.
 - Under it, **each student in school is encouraged to take up a sport, making it a part of their culture.**

Haryana's case highlights that winning medals cannot be the objective of the ecosystem, the ecosystem has to go beyond- where medals are only consequences to prevalence of a sports culture.

What can be done to embed sports in the fabric of Indian Culture?



Taking sports beyond medals and into our culture would require efforts at every level and contribution of all the stakeholders-

- ❖ **Encourage to play:** A culture of sports can only be developed if a significant section of the population plays the sport. Following efforts can be made to create this scenario-
 - **Sports as an integral part of the schooling system:** Sports as an integral part of schooling system (which caters to more than 26 crore students) would give an opportunity to these children to try out different sports with considerable freedom.
 - As a corollary, technical knowledge of sports and bodily awareness needs to be accorded as much importance as the knowledge of language or the sciences in the school system. This would raise the standard of games even at the recreational level.
 - **Strengthening food and nutritional security** through schemes such as mid-day meal, POSHAN Abhiyan is a pre-requisite to create a broader pool of potential players. Eating the right and nutritious food will impact both performance and recovery for both training and competition.
 - **Providing awareness about sports as a career** to ward away any misconceptions that children or parents may have and change the perception of sports as only a leisure activity which does not serve any future utility.
 - **Host to boost:** Regular hosting of international, national as well as local events increases the presence of sports and subsequently interest in it. For example, Commonwealth Games 2010 (hosted in Delhi) inspired a large section of the community to take up or follow sports.



- **Creating and celebrating sporting icons, making them ambassadors of sport:** The same was seen when popularity of cricket shot up with superstars like Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev in 1970s and 1980s.
- **Lending support to traditional sports** like Malakhamb and Kalaripayattu can not only encourage sporting culture but also attract international participation and attain global recognition.
- ❖ **Support to win:** Creating champions who shine at international level warrants creating systems which takes care of the athlete throughout their sporting journey-
 - **Catch them young, catch them right:** An extensive testing framework accompanied by standards of physical parameters for young children in the Indian context needs to be created at the school level itself to help them to pick the right sport to make a career in.
 - This would also help in identifying the sporting areas where certain sections of the population have a comparative advantage. For instance, archery has been a part of India's sporting traditions for the past 5000 years, thus providing a naturally raised standard. This idea can be taken forward with initiatives like **One State, One sport policy**.
 - **Providing support during testing times of the career:** Efforts could be made to create incubation centers or sports scholarships to ease the part of the journey where the player has limited support and resources, such as during transition from district to the national/international stage.
 - Also, for athletes that don't end up at the podium, a back-up needs to be created which gives them alternate careers and opportunities to rebuild their lives.
 - **Overcoming the infrastructural gaps** by attracting capital and interest of all the stakeholders to develop more state-of-the-art sporting complexes and better mapping and management of the current sporting infrastructure at every level and in every region to ensure optimal utilization.
 - **Building and strengthening sports federations and other governmental institutions** by providing them with more autonomy and resources alongside establishing accountability mechanisms and governance structures to ward off prevalent issues like corruption and nepotism. E.g., reforms undertaken in BCCI.
 - As Sports is a state subject, the involvement of state governments, local and district bodies as well as local businesses and media with these federation is critical for development of sports at the ground level.
 - **Augmentation in quality of professional training via coaches and support staff:** Continuous capacity building of people in the training ecosystem, regular performance audits of both trainers and trainees and sensitizing the players as well as the support staff regarding the importance of ethics in sports.
 - **Creating a culture of private sector sponsorships:** It can help athletes in need to acquire quality equipment and infrastructural facilities and at the same time provide marketing gateway to the private sector, generating a win-win for both.
 - For example, the coaching center of wrestling champion Nandini Salokhe funded by a CSR initiative has helped her produce at least half a dozen national-level medalists in the last two years.
- ❖ **Participate to enjoy:** Participation of all stakeholders including players, supporters, spectators, manufacturers, and service providers can be enabled by-
 - **Organization of systematic competitions and leagues for all major sports at all levels** i.e., national, state and district level. This needs to be accompanied by finding and training of local people, adequate coverage, local marketing, and lucrative awards.
 - For instance, the local level football and basketball tournaments in US draw considerable viewership and local interest.



- **Encouraging sporting activities in community interactions:** Participation and frequency of events like Gatka (a form of martial art) competitions as part of festivals in Punjab, Qila Raipur sports festival (a.k.a. India's Rural Olympics) etc. can be increased.
- **Taking pride in sporting excellence:** Passion, emotion, and love for the game accompanied with an understanding of the game, can drive a culture of excellence. E.g., the way games like Kabbadi are played in Haryana.
- **Using Media to galvanize the popularity of sports:** This can be taken even further with more imaginative and innovative approach to participation. E.g., creation of fantasy teams etc.
 - Media can also drive commercialization of sport when supported by private participation and creation of professional sports leagues. For example, the success of Indian Premier League (IPL) has inspired creation of Pro-kabbadi league, Indian Badminton League among others.
- **Encouraging economic participation via supporting industries:** Sports ecosystem of the modern era requires services like, physiotherapy, injury management, data analysis, sports gear, and clothing among others. All these are massive opportunities for entrepreneurs, start-ups, small scale sector as well as the manufacturing industry.
 - Also, sports science and sports psychology are independent fields which are developing. For example, growth in biomechanics industry could generate employment for highly skilled professionals.
- **Embracing new dimensions to sports like E-sports:** E-sports could refer to online games of skill that are played in tournaments. The popularity and frequency of e-sports tournaments is exponentially increasing, especially after 2020.



In Conversation The dawn of E-sports



Vinay: Hey Vini! How is your summer vacation going?

Vini: I have a tournament of Age of Empires (AoE) coming up, so most of my time goes into practice.

Vinay: Oh okay! But why are you taking it so seriously, isn't online gaming just for fun?

Vini: It used to be. But the industry has now developed significantly. For instance, the tournament I am preparing for- Age of Empires II International Tournament- has lakhs of participants across the world and a prize money of \$95,000. Also, E-sports would be a better term to describe such tournaments

Vinay: Wow, that is serious competition! But what is the difference between online gaming and E-sports?

Vini: E-sports refers to digital games of skill that are played in tournaments i.e., different teams and individuals playing against each other to win the championship, league, title like physical sports.

Vinay: But why call them E-sports? Are they similar to traditional sports in any manner?

Vini: Like traditional sports, excelling at E-sports requires hand-eye coordination, attention, visual processing, executive function and strategy development. In fact, E-sports is under the process to be officially recognized by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

Vinay: Great. This seems to be an area with a lot of potential.

Vini: Rightly said Vinay. The industry is expected to double in size in the next four years. This growth is attracting investors, sponsors, advertising agencies and developers. The viewership is expanding with 4 times growth in the past two years.

Vinay: Nice. Also, E-sports does not face many challenges faced by traditional sports like lack of infrastructure, dearth of coaching staff etc.

Vini: True. But E-sports has its own set of challenges such as misconception that E-sports is gambling or a game of chance and its consequent banning by certain states. Additionally, lack of an industry nodal body, regulatory clarity and multiple ministries adds to its woes.

Vinay: I feel as the industry grows these problems will automatically get resolved.

Vini: Yes, hope so.

Vinay: By the way, best of luck for your tournament.

Vini: Thanks Vinay!



Conclusion



The shining performance of India's sportspersons in Tokyo, many of whom overcame significant odds, shows that there is no dearth of talent in India. However, to identify, groom and nurture promising prospects for world-beating athletes will require concerted effort, investment, and cooperation among all key stakeholders of the sports industry in India.

It takes a village to bring up a sportsperson, a multifaceted team that works with synergy and accountability. We must think beyond the glory of the medal winners and see it as a part of our culture, if we are to aspire to the Olympic motto "**Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together**".





TOPIC AT A GLANCE

Sports in India: Olympics and Beyond



Importance of Sports in an individual's life and in society

- ❌ **Develops character and integrity** values such as team spirit, sense of fair play, grit, resilience, and hard work.
- ❌ **Creates an active society** by bringing together people in the form of events, engagements, and competitions.
- ❌ **A platform for equality and inclusion** by acting as an agent of women empowerment to platform for promoting equality among different races and castes.
- ❌ **Building culture and heritage** by imprinting events, icons, and legends in the collective memory.
- ❌ **Empowers youth and brings out the sense of leadership.**

Evolution of India's sporting journey

- ❌ **Participation in Olympics as a colony of British India** at the 1900 Paris Olympics.
- ❌ **The era of Hockey dominance** up till the 1980 Moscow Olympics.
- ❌ **The medal drought and plateaued performance** from 1956 to 2004, stagnating at a single medal mark.
- ❌ **An inflection point- the Beijing Olympics** with which the medal tally has secularly improved.

Beyond Olympics, India has been a major player in Cricket and Kabbadi. Also, it is emerging as a significant player in Chess and Badminton in the recent past.

Reasons for India's sub-optimal performance

- ❌ **Hurdles to generation of interest in sports-**
 - Outside the ambit of the mainstream education.
 - Discrimination, malnutrition, and poverty.
 - Changing nature of society and social activities with increasing urbanization and digitization.
 - Limited interest of private sector in sports.
- ❌ **Hurdles in choosing sports as a profession-**
 - Uncertainty about future prospects with prevalence of 'hero or zero' syndrome.
 - Lack of awareness about importance and opportunities in sports.
 - Infrastructural gaps, equipment shortage and inadequate staff negatively affects school sports.
- ❌ **Hurdles faced by sportspersons-**
 - Poor utilization of the sporting infrastructure.
 - Dearth of quality coaching staff.
 - Funding is limited in nature with percentage of actual expenditure being even lower.
 - Politicization of the sporting federations
 - Lack of clear and functional architecture of sporting federations and events.

These issues collectively drive away children, societies, and communities from sports.

Steps taken by India

- ❌ **Strengthening sports in schools** as part of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
- ❌ **Major sports development schemes** like National Sports Development Fund and National Sports Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS).
- ❌ **Special Area Games Scheme** through Sports Authority of India.
- ❌ **Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Sports in Eklavya Model Residential Schools.**
- ❌ **Khelo India scheme** with its 12 verticals.
- ❌ **The Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).**
- ❌ Looking **beyond traditional sporting areas.**
- ❌ Inclusion of sports in **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** list.
- ❌ **Declaration of sports as an industry** by some States.

Path to embed sports in the fabric of Indian Culture

Encourage to Play

- ❌ Sports as an **integral part of the schooling.**
- ❌ **Strengthening food and nutritional security.**
- ❌ Provide **awareness about sports as a career.**
- ❌ **Lending support to traditional sports.**
- ❌ **Creating and celebrating sporting icons.**

Support to win

- ❌ **Catch them young, catch them right.**
- ❌ Providing **support during testing times.**
- ❌ **Overcoming the infrastructural gaps.**
- ❌ **Strengthening sports federations.**
- ❌ Creating a **culture of private sponsorships.**

Participate to enjoy

- ❌ Organization of **Systematic competitions and leagues for all major sports at all levels.**
- ❌ Encouraging **sporting activities in community interactions** and **taking pride in sporting excellence.**
- ❌ **Using Media to galvanize the popularity of sports** and encouraging economic participation via supporting industries.
- ❌ **Embracing new dimensions to sports like E-sports.**