



ISSN: 2456-4419

Impact Factor: (RJIF): 5.18

Yoga 2021; 6(2): 178-181

© 2021 Yoga

www.theyogicjournal.com

Received: 03-10-2021

Accepted: 07-11-2021

Dr. Sanjay Choudhary

Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Satyawati College, University of Delhi Ashok Vihar, New Delhi, India

Time to restructure our sports policy

Dr. Sanjay Choudhary

Abstract

In the realm of sports, achieving excellence is closely intertwined with fostering patriotic sentiments. Our aim should be to propel India into the forefront of the 21st century, not just in sports, but also in various other domains such as the economy, education, science, technology, arts, and culture. This entails ensuring that India ranks lowest on the global corruption index while securing a high position among the world's most developed nations on the human development index. For any nation aspiring to excel in international sports, it's imperative to cultivate a culture where sports are embraced as a popular pursuit. India needs to embark on a nationwide initiative to provide all its citizens with access to sports facilities and opportunities. Without a broad and robust base of participation, it's unlikely for India to produce a sufficient number of elite athletes capable of competing successfully on the global stage. In essence, ascending to greatness in sports at the highest levels necessitates fostering growth at the grassroots level. To achieve this, there must be significant investment in constructing sporting facilities across the country. Urban planning and housing regulations should include mandatory provisions for the creation of public parks, playgrounds, and sports facilities accessible to all. This integration of sports infrastructure into our societal framework is essential for nurturing a generation of athletes and fostering a culture of sportsmanship and excellence throughout the nation.

Keywords: Sports performance, talent identification, talent selection, talent development

Introduction

India's historical performance in sports, while commendable, falls short of satisfaction considering its large population base, diverse talent pool, rich culture, geographic advantage, and favorable demographics, particularly as it gears up for the 2022 Olympics. The proportion of the population actively participating in sports, termed as effective participation, remains disappointingly low despite India's vast population. Moreover, the nature of sports success tends to follow a pyramid structure, where only a small fraction of competitors rise to the top. With a small base, our pinnacle achievements are bound to be short-lived. India stands as the poorest performer in the Olympics concerning both population size and medal count. It's perplexing that a nation with over 1.2 billion people can only secure an average of less than one medal per Games. However, it would be erroneous to claim that India lacks talented athletes altogether. Cricket stands as a prime example, with legends like Sachin Tendulkar gracing the sport. The Indian cricket team currently holds the title of world one-day champions and has, until recently, dominated Test cricket globally. Additionally, in the mid-20th century, the Indian men's hockey team achieved remarkable success, clinching six consecutive Olympic gold medals, contributing significantly to India's total of 20 Olympic medals, with a substantial portion attributed to hockey ^[1].

Our Sporting Legacy

India's Olympic history dates back to 1928 when Jaipal Singh led the hockey team, marking the beginning of our nation's remarkable journey in the sport. Over the years, India has clinched eight gold medals in hockey, securing victories in prestigious events like the Olympics in Amsterdam (1928), Los Angeles (1932), Berlin (1936), London (1948), Helsinki (1952), Melbourne (1956), Tokyo (1964), and Moscow (1980). This dominance persisted for six consecutive Olympics, showcasing India's prowess on the global stage. However, recent performances raise concerns. Despite being home to 1.2 billion people, representing one-sixth of the world's population, India's medal tally in the London Olympics was disheartening, with

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Sanjay Choudhary

Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Satyawati College, University of Delhi Ashok Vihar, New Delhi, India

only six medals and no gold, contrasting sharply with Abhinav Bindra's solitary gold in Beijing. This translated to a mere 0.06 percent of the total 962 medals awarded in London. Overall, India has secured only 26 medals across all Olympic Games held to date [2].

In contrast, nations like the United States (31.5 million people), China (Whose population is comparable to India's), and even Britain (62 million people) have significantly outperformed India in medal counts. Surprisingly, smaller nations like South Korea, with a population of just 50 million, have excelled in sports despite lagging behind India in development until the 1960s. Even under strict communist rule, North Korea has managed to clinch multiple gold medals. Cuba, with a population of 11.2 million, stands as another example of a smaller nation with remarkable athletic prowess. These comparisons underscore the need for introspection and strategic planning to elevate India's performance in the global sporting arena. Despite our rich sporting heritage, there's a pressing need for concerted efforts to regain our former glory and compete effectively on the international stage [3].

Problems Faced By Indian Sports

As per the Planning Commission of India, the country was projected to have a youthful population of 510 million individuals aged 15 to 35 by 2016, making it the world's youngest nation. Providing athletic opportunities to such a vast youth population to achieve two objectives will undoubtedly pose a challenge for the country: enhancing national fitness and fostering the development of champions. Accomplishing these goals necessitates a robust sports policy, and every resource must be mobilized to ensure its effective implementation, thereby transforming the nation into a sporting powerhouse. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) endeavors to meet the nation's needs through various programs, including the National Sports Talent Contest (NSTC) Scheme, the SAI Training Centre (STC) Scheme, the National Coaching Scheme, among others. Despite India's consistent participation in international events, the nation struggles to achieve sustained success in the global sports arena. This could be attributed to the country's failure to identify and nurture talent at the right age, compounded by several underlying issues such as:

Issues in Sports Development

- 1. Deficiency in Infrastructural Facilities:** Many regions lack adequate sports infrastructure, including stadiums, training centers, and playing fields, hindering the development of athletes.
- 2. Deficiency in Maintenance of Existing Infrastructure:** Even where facilities exist, inadequate maintenance leads to their deterioration, limiting their effectiveness and usability for athletes.
- 3. Deficiency in Career Direction:** Athletes often lack proper guidance and support in choosing and pursuing a career in sports, leading to uncertainty and missed opportunities.
- 4. Deficiency in Educational Support:** Athletes face challenges in accessing education and building a career outside of sports once they retire, due to limited educational support and resources.
- 5. Deficiency in Transparency and Accountability:** Lack of transparency and accountability within sports organizations can negatively impact the careers of athletes, leading to unfair treatment and missed

opportunities.

- 6. Deficiency in Coaching Programs:** There is a shortage of qualified coaches who can effectively identify, nurture, and develop sporting talent, hindering the growth of athletes.
- 7. Deficiency in Technological Applications:** Limited use of technology in sports training and preparation hampers the optimization of athletes' performance, including analyzing motion, force, muscle activity, and movement.
- 8. Deficiency in Psychological Analysis:** Athletes often lack access to psychological support and analysis, which is essential for developing mental resilience and driving them towards achieving excellence in their sport.
- 9. Deficiency in Sports Medicine Applications:** Inadequate utilization of sports medicine leads to suboptimal fitness levels, increased risk of injuries, and insufficient support for recovery and rehabilitation, impacting athletes' performance and longevity in their careers [4].

What Needs to Be Done

- 1. Prioritize Sports Facilities in Educational Institutions:** Our national policy should prioritize the provision of sports facilities in schools and colleges. It's crucial for sporting talent in India to flourish that children and youth engage in sports on a large scale from a young age.
- 2. Promote Mass Participation in Sports:** Making sports a mass activity is essential for fostering a healthy nation. Emphasizing the importance of sports as a national movement can be achieved effectively and affordably through activities like Yoga, which is widely accessible and promotes fitness and well-being.
- 3. Professional Overhaul:** A comprehensive overhaul in professionalism is needed, starting with thorough planning and continuing until a robust system of control is established. This transformation requires financial resources, which can only be generated by transitioning India's amateur sports system into a revenue-generating model.
- 4. Reforming Governing Bodies:** The governance of sports bodies in India is often influenced by political leaders and bureaucrats, hindering professional development. Transforming these bodies into commercial entities, regulated under the Companies Act 2013, can foster accountability and facilitate resource allocation for sports development.
- 5. Long-term Development Plans:** Mandate all sports bodies to submit Long-term Development Plans (LTDPs) to higher authorities to receive grants. These plans should outline systematic infrastructure, developmental, and marketing strategies for the comprehensive growth of sports disciplines.
- 6. Constitutional Reforms:** Consider shifting sports from the "State" list to the "Concurrent" list in the Constitution to ensure uniform sporting opportunities nationwide. Establishing a sports culture with a sustainable revenue system is crucial for consistently producing champions.
- 7. Bottom-up Approach:** Encourage grassroots participation by adopting a bottom-up approach. Each individual can contribute by motivating at least one child to engage in sports, thereby nurturing a culture of athleticism and excellence from the grassroots level upward [5].

Talent Identification: Talent identification is the systematic

process of pinpointing children and adolescents who exhibit the potential to excel in a particular sport. This involves screening them through targeted assessments of their physical attributes, physiological capacities, and skill sets. Importantly, prior participation in the sport is not a prerequisite for identification. By employing objective criteria and assessments, we can identify individuals with inherent talent and provide them with the opportunity to pursue their athletic potential, regardless of their prior experience in the sport.

Talent Identification

The process of talent selection involves identifying young athletes who are deeply involved in a particular sport. This can be done through various methods, including the guidance of experienced coaches and conducting thorough assessments such as physical, physiological, and skill testing. These evaluations help determine which individuals possess the greatest potential for success in their chosen sport.

Talent Development

After identifying or selecting promising athletes, it's crucial to provide them with an optimal environment to help them reach their full potential. This encompasses various elements such as access to top-notch facilities and equipment, as well as support for sports science and medicine. Additionally, athletes require suitable coaching, structured training programs, and opportunities for competition to foster their growth and development in their respective sports.

The importance of sports in society cannot be overstated. Sports foster physical health, social cohesion, and national pride. However, many countries, including ours, are grappling with outdated sports policies that fail to meet modern needs. It's high time we restructure our sports policy to address current challenges and maximize the potential of sports as a tool for development and unity ^[6].

Addressing Grassroots Development

A well-structured sports policy must prioritize grassroots development. This begins with investment in school sports programs. Currently, many schools lack adequate facilities, trained coaches, and proper equipment. By allocating more resources to school sports, we can nurture young talent from an early age. Programs that encourage participation in various sports will help identify and develop diverse talents.

Community sports centers are another crucial component. These centers should be accessible and well-equipped, offering opportunities for both recreational and competitive sports. By fostering a sports culture at the community level, we can encourage lifelong participation in physical activities, contributing to a healthier population ^[7].

Enhancing Professional Training and Support

To compete at the highest levels, athletes need professional training and support. This includes hiring qualified coaches, sports scientists, and medical professionals who can provide comprehensive training programs. Athletes must have access to world-class facilities and the latest technology to enhance their performance. Financial support is also critical. Many talented athletes struggle to pursue their careers due to financial constraints. Scholarships, sponsorships, and grants can help alleviate these burdens. Additionally, implementing policies that ensure fair remuneration and career support for athletes can make sports a viable career option, attracting more talent to the field ⁸.

Emphasizing Inclusivity and Diversity

A restructured sports policy must promote inclusivity and diversity. This means creating opportunities for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, or physical ability. Women's sports, in particular, need more support and visibility. Equal funding, media coverage, and opportunities for women can help bridge the gender gap in sports.

Programs for differently-abled athletes should also be prioritized. Adaptive sports programs, accessible facilities, and specialized coaching can help these athletes reach their full potential. By celebrating diversity, we not only enhance the sports community but also promote social inclusion and unity.

Strengthening Governance and Accountability

Effective governance is crucial for the success of any sports policy. This involves transparent decision-making processes, accountability, and regular monitoring and evaluation. Sports federations and organizations must operate with integrity and fairness. Implementing anti-corruption measures and ensuring ethical conduct are essential to maintaining trust in sports administration ^[9]. Collaboration between government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations can also enhance the effectiveness of sports policies. Public-private partnerships can mobilize additional resources and expertise, driving innovation and development in the sports sector.

Promoting Sports for Development

Sports have the power to drive social change and development. A modern sports policy should recognize and harness this potential. Initiatives that use sports as a tool for education, health promotion, and community building can have far-reaching impacts. Programs targeting at-risk youth, for example, can reduce crime rates and improve educational outcomes.

International cooperation is also essential. By engaging in global sports initiatives and exchanges, we can learn from best practices around the world and improve our own sports systems ¹⁰.

Conclusion

After years of experimentation with various strategies, it is evident that we have yet to fully realize our potential in athletics. It is high time for us to introduce new policies focused on identifying, nurturing, and selecting talent. While there has been some improvement in our athletes' recent performances, it remains insufficient to satisfy our aspirations of achieving global excellence. To foster a culture of sports in India, concerted efforts are necessary at all levels, with support from the government, parents, educational institutions, and civil society. The significant and disproportionate emphasis on cricket over other sports, both in terms of public perception and funding allocation, must be rectified. This requires substantial national intervention in areas such as TV broadcasting regulations, corporate sponsorships, and advertising practices. While there has been progress, we are still in the nascent stages of development. While opportunities exist for young Indians, there is a pressing need for enhanced facilities and expanded avenues. It is undeniable that strides are being made, but there is much room for advancement.

References

1. Shephard RJ, Jequier JC, LaBarre R, Rajie M. Habitual physical activity. In: Bouchard C, Shephard RJ, Stephens

- T, Sutton JR, McPherson BD, editors. Exercise, Fitness, and Health: A Consensus of Current Knowledge. Champaign (IL): Human Kinetics Publishers; c1990. p. 97-119.
2. Grewal CS. Why Physical Education. Vyayam Vidnyam. 1989;22(4):15-19.
 3. Jade SA. History of Physical Education. Kolhapur: Malti Publications; c1993. p. 90.
 4. Bloom BS, editor. Developing talent in young people. New York: Ballantine Books; c1985.
 5. Bompa T. From childhood to champion athlete. Toronto (ON): Veritas; c1985.
 6. Gould D, Carson S. Myths surrounding the role of youth sports in developing Olympic champions. Youth Studies Australia. 2004;23(4):17-23.
 7. Gould D, Finch LM, Jackson SA. Coping strategies used by national champion figure skaters. J Sport Exerc Psychol. 1993;15:134-159.
 8. Kobasa SC. Stressful life events, personality, and health: an inquiry into hardiness. J Pers Soc Psychol. 1979;37:1-11.
 9. McCleod WD, Hunter SC, Etchison B. Performance measurement and percent body fat in the high school athlete. Am J Sports Med. 1983;11:390-397.
 10. Semenick D. Anaerobic testing: practical applications. NSCA J. 1984;6(5):45, 70-73.
 11. Singer RE. Psychological testing: what value to coaches and athletes? Int J Sport Psychol. 1988;19:87-106.