



ISSUES RELATED TO SPORTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Sports in India have gone through a major transformation since the last few years. A few decades back sports were just seen as a past-time or a mode of entertainment but due to the various positive changes such as the commercialization of sports in India, formation of various sporting leagues and rise of media, social media and internet the stereotypical views regarding sports in India have been changing. Today sports are considered by maximum people as a career and have been encouraging their ward or children to opt for sports right from their school days. However, despite this fact there are various issues related to sports in India that is still prevailing. These issues have been there since decades or some issues have cropped up recently. Hence, this paper is a humble attempt to trace those issues and describe those issues in detail. The paper is a work based upon secondary sources mainly, articles and chapters of edited books and some online articles as well.

Keywords: Sports, Issues, Sportspersons, India

INTRODUCTION

Indian sports have advanced significantly over the past ten years, although they are still behind most other nations. Although Indians have been playing well and competing against the greatest countries in the world at the junior and sub-junior levels, it cannot be stated that there is a talent shortage in India. Indians have, however, consistently performed terribly at the senior levels. Although though it has a population of over a billion people, with around half of them under 25, India is notable among nations for having won comparatively few Olympic medals. There are different issues that can be related to this failure. It may be due to lack of infrastructure, absence of a sporting culture, officials who neither retire nor contribute corporate apathy, government indifference, poverty, malnutrition, widespread vegetarianism, neglected infrastructure, the lack of sponsorship, the theft of money and equipment, political corruption, institutional disorganization, social immobility, the predominance of cricket, and other cultural factors. These are, of course, just a handful of obvious reasons for India's downhill ride in international sport; there are hundreds of other, more mitigating, reasons that are not so easily apparent. Below discussed are some major issues that may have created some sort of barrier for the progress of sports in India.

SPORTS ISSUES IN INDIA

Social barriers

Developing countries like India always have to face social and cultural barriers in every field. Likewise in sports too athletes have to go through these problems. Sports in India have always been considered as a mode of recreation or hobby. Before a decade only a handful of people took sports seriously. These may be largely due to the fact that the past generations never encouraged their children to choose sports as a career. Parents always are scared to help their children to pursue sports as a career instead of academics. As a result, if we look at the facts and figures, according to the latest survey India have been producing 1.5 million engineers every year, on the other hand, there are only handful of new sports person who have gained to achieve success in major sporting events. Even today probable future sports person has to leave their passion due to peer pressure or the social barriers that they have to face. This is especially major in case of female athletes. Society in India has always considered doctors and engineers as the most prestigious job. Their outlook towards sports as a job or a career has always been meager. They consider sports as just another unrewarding persuasion in our endless fight for survival. Attached to this social pressure are the cultural dogmas that are more ignorant and obtuse.

Cultural barriers are something that Asian children frequently have to deal with. One of the main causes of the poor participation in sports has been identified as the unfavourable attitude of minority populations in various nations, particularly India, regarding their children's engagement in sporting activities. In their study, McGuire and Collins (1998) found that parents of ethnic minorities do not always value or value the engagement of their children in sports. Much has been written about the importance put on academic success and the pursuit of a "good" career instead of involvement in sports. Further they discovered that parental involvement had the greatest impact on the levels of engagement in sports in their research of boys of Asian descent. Additionally, they discovered that as boys advance through secondary school, the parental effect on conduct grows. Sports were perceived as lacking academic legitimacy since Asian ancestry parents prioritise academic excellence for their boys in order to help them land "excellent" professions in the future.(Jon Best, 2001)

In India married sportswomen often have to face the cultural and social barriers. The Indian society assumes that the running of household and caring for the family should take precedence over and possibly should exclude any extra-curricular activities, including sports. Within this, there was a belief that participation in sport was not an appropriate activity, given these other priorities. Even today playing sports professionally is not seen as a rewarding their kids to play sports, parents push them to become physician and engineers. In the proverb *kheloge kudoge hoge kharab; Padhoge likhoge hoge nawab*, this is portrayed. Therefore, participation in athletics will ruin your life whereas intellectual success will make it a king's life (Khureja, 2021).

Economic Issues

As one of the much-heralded BRICS nations, India is viewed many as having one of the world's most important economies. Reports suggest Indian growth has even started outpace that of Brazil and China. Therefore, it is a reflection of India's growing economic strength and nation's love for sport that the country is host to one of the world sport's most compelling competitions – the Indian Premier League. Though the cricket league (IPL)

boosts of matching economic prowess of that of Superbowl and UEFA Champions League but on the other hand apart from cricket other sports have been facing major economic crisis since decades. This is drastically true in case of economically backward sports person. Many of the sportsperson who belongs to poor background often have to live in the government run hostels and train at sports academies. These sportspersons have to often face harassment in different forms due to the lack of fund.

Ideas about how to make things right have never been short in supply. A national sports infrastructure was created by SAI in March 1984 to assist in developing talented teenagers into champions. 75 core centers and 250 satellite locations are now dispersed around the nation. With the exception of cricket, sports continue to be a low national priority even though it teaches thousands of children in a variety of sports. This is partially due to a lack of funding, but it is also a big reason why it hasn't been able to deliver on its promise. Individual coaches or athletes might be given credit for some of the recent sporting victories in sports like badminton, boxing, wrestling, shooting, etc.. (Weekly, 2015)

There is huge salary indifference among the sportsperson belonging to different sports too. Since, cricket is the most viewed and played sport in India therefore cricketers are paid more than any other players belonging to other sports. If we look at facts and figures, in India, Grade A cricketer earns INR 1 Crore, Grade B cricketer earns INR 50 Lakhs while a Grade C cricketer earns 25 Lakhs. Apart from these salaries, cricket players are paid INR 7 lakh for every test match, INR 4 lakh for every ODI and INR 2 lakh for every T20 match. Besides these, players get a lot of money for being part of IPL teams. Ranji Trophy players are paid much lesser than the players of the national squad. Champions of Ranji Trophy are awarded INR 2 crores which has to be split among all players. Runners up are awarded INR 1 crore and the third position teams are awarded INR 50 lakhs. Recently, BCCI decided to award INR 12,000 per match for every player, apart from the match winning money. While, in hockey, since, players have no contracts with the hockey federation, players do not get salaries but get match remunerations. However, contracts are in line and once formed; players are likely to get INR 15 lakhs per annum as retainership fee but not all players. In deciding the retainership fee, 50 percent weightage is to be given to fitness levels and another 50 percent is for overall performance. The governing body has mentioned a clause that if the team manages to reach into the top six teams of the world, the retainership fee will be significantly hiked. In addition, players are likely to get INR 25000 per match. While, football player who plays for national squad earns salary of 50 Lakhs per annum which is meager compared to that of salary of an Indian cricketer. (Naukrihub, 2015)

In comparison to China, the US, and other nations that do better in international athletic events, the Indian government spends far less. This makes it necessary for athletes to make private purchases in order to arrange high-quality equipment, travel, and train, which puts disadvantaged individuals at a very significant disadvantage. (Khureja, 2021)

Government Interference and Nepotism

As mentioned above, sport is one area where India lags behind even to some of the poorest nations of the world despite a huge pool of talented sportsperson. Though Indian boys and girls have managed to achieve success in

both national and international sporting scenario but the problem lies in the senior level. Even though huge amount is spent on training and grooming of the players but still desired results has not been achieved. The prime reason for poor performance is corruption, nepotism and political interference. Due to this many a time a good player is left out. The government and respective boards are the main culprit for letting down India. Sports federations have become vehicles for politicians, civil servants, military leaders and businessmen to stay in power and portray themselves as promoters of sports in India. The fact is sports in India have become a victim of political games that these people play. Many of them are corrupt, lack professionalism and are often biased. The end result is obvious in our performance at the Olympic Games and other international championships. However, the fundamental problem lies in the absence of sporting culture in India. This explains to a large extent, the apathy on the part of government machinery towards sports. Those who suffer due to such sordid conditions are the athletes, who have the talent and desire to compete and excel themselves in the international arena but they need to be given proper grooming and training which they have been denied. The ugly conditions in the sports bodies have been repeatedly revealed by several stories such as the coaches misbehaving with women athletes, selecting people in the team based on favoritism and bribes etc. People in India have been watching helplessly and with sadness, while the sports authorities have been behaving as if they are not accountable to anybody and neither the government nor anyone else can touch them. Without a doubt, the existing system of sports governance in India plainly lacks transparency and accountability, which fosters a climate that is favourable to widespread corruption and jeopardises the legitimacy of a competition as a whole. Even the IPL, one of the better run professional sports leagues in India, which is also the most lucrative, has recently been at the centre of criticism. Hence, unless systems are put in place to regulate the enormous amounts of money and the interests of numerous stakeholders, such tournaments would always face the risk of losing credibility, having a detrimental influence on the future of its participants and stakeholders (Ranajit Bhattacharyya, 2021)

The unprogressive nature of sports in India may be due to the large number of politicians involved in sports federation. This structure brings with it various interests that have less to do with the development of sport and everything to do with wholesale collusive reentering. BCCI was under fire few years back because the chairman was not a politician but a businessman. He was succeeded by Sharad Pawar who doubled as agriculture minister. Yashwant Sinha once headed the tennis federation, K P S Gill and one Vidya Stokes, the latter a notably minor politician, headed the hockey federations, Suresh Kalmadi headed the Olympic association until his ouster on corruption charges. The football body is headed by Praful Patel, who took over from another politician, Priyaranjan Dasmunsi, after he slipped into a coma. (Standard, 2013). At present there are more than 70 recognized national sports federations (NSF), of which 38 have politicians at the helm.

Regional discrepancy

Since time immemorial India has been facing the regional problems. It has always been perceived that certain regions enjoy major facilities as compared to the other parts of the country. In this scenario, sports too don't lack behind. The Indians have the preconceived notion that athletes from north-western and southern part of the country are better than the other parts. According to the report submitted to the Planning Commission of India

by Sports Authority of India (SAI), the deployment of the coaches in different region of the country shows that majority of them are concentrated on Northern region that is more than one fourth of the total coaches. The pattern of deployment is not uniform and there is lot of discrepancy between requirement and deployment.

Region wise deployment of Coaches

Sl. No.	Region	No. of Coaches	%
1	Northern Region	356	23.22
2	Central Region	307	20.02
3	Western Region	193	12.59
4	Southern Region	324	21.13
5	Northeast Region	78	5.09
6	Eastern Region	216	14.09
7	NIS Patiyala	59	3.85
	Total	1533	100.00

Source: Planning Commission of India, 2015

Likewise, if we look at the table presented below, we find a huge gap among the funds provided by Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA) to the different states. Generally, if we analyze the below presented table, north-eastern states get lesser amount of funds as compared to the north-western and southern states of India. For instance, the North-East states of India receives a combined fund of Rs. 77411302 which is way lower than that of Uttar Pradesh i.e., Rs. 132475574. Below presented is the report that illustrates the funds that was awarded to the different states of India by Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan.

State wise details of funds released under RGKA during 2014-2015

Sl. No.	Name of State/UTs	Infrastructure	Competitions	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	0	30561024	30561024
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0	6800000	6800000
3	Assam	0	12700000	12700000
4	Gujarat	0	58370000	58370000
5	Haryana	0	30522318	30522318

6	Himachal Pradesh	0	17960000	17960000
7	Jammu & Kashmir	0	11324700	11324700
8	Jharkhand	0	2550000	2550000
9	Karnataka	0	59056993	59056993
10	Kerala	0	41669356	41669356
11	Maharashtra	0	51836656	51836656
12	Madhya Pradesh	0	88495641	88495641
13	Manipur	0	14180470	14180470
14	Meghalaya	0	9888875	9888875
15	Mizoram	0	13325383	13325383
16	Orissa	0	46960000	46960000
17	Punjab	0	34880000	34880000
18	Sikkim	0	6060000	6060000
19	Telangana	0	76000000	76000000
20	Tripura	0	14456304	14456304
21	Uttarakhand	0	16978503	16978503
22	Uttar Pradesh	0	132475574	132475574
23	West Bengal	0	51095703	51095703
	Total	0	828147500	828147500
24	SAI	0	8200000	8200000
	Total	0	836347500	836347500
25	MD RGKA(A&P)	0	2065130	2065130
	Total	0	838412630	838412630

Source: Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports 2015

Similarly, biases during selection on regional basis have plagued the Indian sports community for a long time. While most of us believe that the community has done away with such discrimination but there are no dearth's

of instances where such discrimination has occurred. Especially, we are forced to believe such kind of incidents when allegation comes from a prominent sportsperson like MC Marykom. Recently, she alleged that Pinky Jangra from Haryana is repeatedly favored by selectors despite being beaten by the five-time world champion. Despite having bagged a medal at the London Olympics, Mary Kom was dropped from the 2014 Commonwealth Games squad and Jangra was selected instead. Jangra had beaten Mary in the trial of the 51 kg category which Mary alleged poorly judged. (Dawood, 2015) This clearly shows the bias attitude of the selectors towards her for being from the North East. There are many such incidents which don't even see the light of the day.

Yet in recent times, the government and several other sports organisations have made significant efforts to clean up India's sporting messes, and its slowly improving in its weak areas. The present government have taken various schemes to develop and remove the issues that India has been facing. The updated Khelo India initiative, which would cost Rs. 1,756 crores from 2017–2018 to 2019–2020, was approved by the Federal Cabinet. The initiative intends to mainstream sport as a vehicle for personal growth, community growth, economic growth, and societal growth. Infrastructure, community sports, talent discovery, coaching for excellence, competition format, and the sports business will all be impacted by the redesigned Khelo India Program (Josh, 2017)

The government has been giving money to recognized National Sports Federations (NSFs) through the "Assistance to National Sports Federations" Programme to boost girls' and women's exposure, training, and participation at the national and international levels.

The accomplishments of Indian sports or sports person will greatly increase if all the obstacles and issues are resolved through closing the gaps and enhancing the nation's sports culture. Nevertheless, a number of civil society organisations are already embracing the task of making India a sport nation by empowering young people. By introducing sports into the kid's everyday life, parents want to increase their kid's self-esteem, confidence, and build their personality as well as pave the path for a future in sports.

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