



Category: Indian Govt a & Society's Attitude



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INDIAN GOVT'S AND SOCIETY'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SPORTS AND SPORTS PERSONS

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Sports in many countries, including India, are believed to be a very important part of children's mental and physical well being. This being said, one might think that India being the 2nd most populated country in the world, it would be on top of the list when it comes to sports. But that is not the case.

India is a developing country and only a few notable cities like Delhi, Bombay, Hyderabad, and Bangalore are developed. Most of the population is economically poor and about 30% of the population is under the poverty line. Because of this situation, most of the parents want their children to excel academically. In case of adults, the stress to earn money and support their families surpasses their interest to participate in sports. Taking this in to consideration, the percentage of population taking sports as a career is too low.

On the flip side, the Indian Government's attitude can be considered from a political view. It doesn't invest much in sports as it's something that won't bore immediate results and as a result of this, the sport facilities lack the proper infrastructure, maintenance and coaching. There are quite a few sports related scholarships and incentives given to the students who excel in sports. But in the recent times, the Government has started some initiatives to support the students who are good at sports. A few of the initiatives include, reservations in jobs, stipend and scholarships for the students etc.,

Detrimental Factors:

There are many factors that are detrimental to the encouragement of sports in the Indian society. Here are some to list a few of these degenerating factors*.

1. Discrimination of different sports- Cricket is given a much higher priority when it comes to sports. Any other sports like basketball and soccer are not given any sort of importance at all. A few other sports like rugby and American football are just unheard of, in India.
2. Discrimination of castes- This is one of the most adverse factors that contributes to the degradation of the advocacy of sports encouragement in India.
3. Inadequate funds from the Government- As stated above, Indian Government doesn't invest much in developing the infrastructure of the sports industry.
4. Lack of encouragement from the parents and society- Talented youth are being coerced to forget their dreams and leave their talents to waste.
5. Gender discrimination- In India, gender discrimination has been rooted in every possible scenario. Even in sports, women are discriminated at many levels.

*Each of the aforementioned factors will be described in detail in the upcoming paragraphs.

- Discrimination of different sports: Cricket seems to be the only sport that is played and in fact, encouraged by the society. Other sports like hockey, tennis and badminton are being played but have got attention only in the recent years.

Notable sports players like Sania Mirza in Tennis, Saina Nehwal and Srikanth Kidambi in Badminton have been recognized in the recent years. The most interesting thing about these three players is that they are all from the once united Andhra Pradesh. Sania Mirza has recently won the doubles US Open



and Wimbeldon Championships. She was noticed by the Indian Govt. and society after she made her debut in 2003. She has encouraged a lot of Indian youth to take up Tennis. Saina Nehwal is ranked at No. 1 in Women's single in the world by the Badminton World Federation. She represented India at the 2012 Olympics and won a Bronze medal. Srikanth Kidambi defeated Lin Dan, Worlds No.1, during the China open 2014, November and caught the media's attention.

Despite having many such sports icons in various sports, Cricket seems to be the only sport that has gained a lot of attention. Every child wants to play cricket and doesn't want to play any other sports and this has to change if we want to see India winning medals at the Olympics.

- Discrimination of castes: The caste system has deep-rooted its evil claws in all the facets of society and that has affected the society negatively in every possible way. Even in the 21st century, it's very difficult for the backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to hone their sports interests and make a living out of them.
- Many talented athletes and players that have once won medals at international level are not unheard of and were left behind in the past. Here are a few examples (These are all people from the backward classes from the rural India):
 1. Hockey is the national sport of India, and one would think that a player of India's hockey team, a good one at that, would at least be taken care of financially. But, Shankar Laxman, the goal keeper in the 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympic Games is a classic example. He led his team to win 2 gold medals and a silver medal at the Olympics, but missed the selection for the 1968 Olympics. After that he remained in the Army, and yet died of dire poverty in his last years.
 2. Sarwan Singh won the Gold medal at the 110m hurdles at the 1954 Asian Games. Even with this, the Indian Government did not support him in any sort. He started driving a cab and the conditions got so bad that he had to 'beg' to make a living.

These are just a few examples and there are many others who have been forgotten.

- Lack of funds: The Government didn't invest in funding the sports or the people that represent India internationally. This coupled with the society's lack of support to sports other than Cricket has negatively affected many Indian athletes.

For instance, Nisha Rani Dutt, an archer from the village of Pathmada, Jharkhand won the best archer's award in Taiwan. She joined the Tata Archery Academy in 2005 trying to excel in archery and earn a living for her family. The Government used to pay her a stipend of 500-600 INR and that was nowhere enough. Currently, she is jobless and had to leave her love and talent for archery.

- Lack of encouragement from Society and Parents: India is mostly consisted of middle class and lower class families. Most of these families work on hourly basis and it's even very difficult for them to put some food on the table at the end of the night. That's why most of the children from these families are either sent to schools to excel academically and make a living out of that or end up in child labor. Even the children that are very much interested in playing a sport or are really good at one, are literally being forced to not pursue their dreams.
- Gender discrimination: India is a, and always has been a male chauvinistic society where the female gender has been discriminated over and over. The women are generally expected to do the household work and not to take up anything that they like. Karnam Malleswari is an exception. She is not the typical Indian woman. She is the first woman from India to win a medal at the 2000 Olympics, lifting a 250kg barbell. She won 12 gold and 3 silver medals during her 10 year career. When she first came in to the lime light, the society greatly discouraged her, telling her that 'weight lifting' isn't

International Journal of Law, Education, Social and Sports Studies (IJLESS)

A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Research Journal

Homepage: www.ijless.kypublications.com

Vol. 2. Supplementary issue 3.2015 (October)



something that a woman should be doing. Despite of all the hurdles, she became quite noted and had a wonderful career.

The aforementioned examples are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other athletes that once won medals for the country and are now forgotten by the present.

Factors that need to be changed:

In order to instill and encourage the youth today, the following four important roles of the different facets of the society should be highly made effective.

1. Role of Parents
 2. Role of Educational Institutions
 3. Role of Sponsors
 4. Role of Provincial and Central Governments
 5. Role of Media
- **Role of Parents:** Now-a-days, parents seem to be concerned a lot about their children's progress reports more than anything. All they care about is 'seeing the A+ distinction' grade on the report sheet. They don't seem to care much about the extra-curricular activities or sports that their children have their interest in. Because of this, many young talented children's dreams are being thwarted even before they reach adolescence. They want to see their child to get well settled in Multy National Company (MNC) and earn a lot of money. And honestly, to a certain extent, this seems a little fair too as most of the ex-sportsmen who have earned medals for the country in the past are now long forgotten and are in desolate condition. If the child's dream to pursue his/her talent in a sport is to be augmented, then the role of parents in this regard has to change.

Parents should let their children to pursue their interest in sports and encourage them. Coercing their children to do something they are not interested in, just makes things worse. They lose interest in their dreams in sports at an early age. All they are being forced to do is to study and excel academically. This environment of stress at such a young age, leads to a lot of predicaments in the future. On the positive note, sports have a lot of positive effects on the mind of the child. Physical activities, even if the child is not good at the sport, supply oxygen to the brain and are very good for the heart as well. The child will be healthy and this mindset of playing a sport will lead to good health.

- **Role of Educational Institutions:** Schools and colleges have now become more of a business rather than a place where the learning youth go to learn. Most of the schools now don't even have a play-ground attached to them. This is even worse in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Children are being forced by the teachers and parents to forsake their dreams and do well in the academics. The future of the child is mostly dependent on how the mentor- teacher- shapes their thinking. If the educational institutions don't encourage them to pick a sport and play it regularly, it won't help them have a peace of mind at all. In other countries like USA, there's a requirement that every student has to take up a sport in order to graduate High School. This way, the youth's minds are shaped in such a way that playing a sport is good for a healthy life style. The same has to be inculcated in the Indian educational systems as well. The Government schools don't even have proper infrastructure to facilitate the sports equipment. As more and more schools incorporate this style of making the child adopt a sport at a young age, there are more chances that more youth of India will be representing India internationally.

This can start with inculcating basic steps like, having a play ground for each school, coaching the students and having atleast 2-4 Gym or Sport classes every week.

- **Role of Sponsors:** In India, when it comes to sports, the first thing that comes to ones' mind is 'Cricket'. Out of the 1.2 Billion, at least 50% of the population plays cricket and yet, we only won the



World Cup just twice. Everyone is interested in watching or playing Cricket and nothing else. They are just interested in playing it, not many want to pursue this as a professional career. The very few that want to pursue this sport professionally are being thwarted by the internal politics of Board of Cricket control in India (BCCI). Many good players have made their debut on the international level, but are now long forgotten. Seeing this, even though the youth is interested in playing the sport, most of them don't want to pursue it.

The others who are interested in playing any sport other than Cricket are just overlooked. Only the few that make it big internationally like Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal and Vijender Singh are the success stories. These people had some encouragement from the family and are above middle class. How about the many significant others that are in the lower class but are very good at many other sports? The answer is that they are just forgotten. This is where the role of the sponsors comes in. Like the general population of India, even the sponsors are interested in Cricket. This has to change as well.

This is the same case with the sponsors as well. All they are interested in is Cricket. With the correct attitude and searching for your talent, in a country with 1.2 Billion people, the sponsors should have no difficulty to find young talent in various sports.

- **Role of Provincial and Central Governments:** The Government at state and central level should come forward with initiatives for encouraging the youth that are good at any sport. More scholarships should be given for students in schools and colleges to make sure that the students get good academic knowledge and excel in their choice of sport.

The Government should allot enough funds for the schools and colleges to incorporate a proper play ground with appropriate infrastructure and coaching regimen. Even if the superiors allot funds for schools and colleges, the corrupt intermediate officers keep a part of those funds and leave the bits to the schools. With a change in this, one can be sure that the more students would excel in sports and represent India at an international level.

Awards given to Sportsmen:

- Arjuna Award
 - Dronacharya Award
 - Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna
 - Dhyan Chand Award
- **Role of Media:** Media holds the power to make the world upside down. In the 21st century, with the plethora of media channels, even the remotely located villages are now electronically reached. The different types of media are television, radio, newspaper, internet and social media. Recently, Mr. Narendra Modi the respected Prime Minister of India met with the CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg in order to promote Digital India. If this works out well, then even the remotely connected villages in India will have access to the internet. The general population can post their performance on social media where thousands of sponsors can look them up and contact them if they are interested. Youth, who can't get a sponsor or are not getting the correct attention that they are intended to, can reach out to the Government as well.

Many athletes that have once got medals to India at International level have now been forgotten. A few examples have been given in the section above. Media should reach out to them and give the proper reputation that they really deserve. These athletes represented India at International level and all that the Indian Government did for them was nothing! They were not even paid reasonable stipends or given a chance at a Government Job. But instead, the Government is making the rich richer and the poor who are really good at various sports have been forgotten.

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Homepage:www.ijless.kypublications.com

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Internet plays an important role of all the media that is present now. Even the children in schools now have a mobile with an internet connection and almost every 3 of 5 households have a computer with an internet connection. With level of ease of access to the internet, everyone can be updated with the latest news every minute. The media should concentrate on sports and should host more shows that relate to various sports. They should also make sure that the Government and Educational institutions do their part in encouraging the sports and if any malpractice has been noticed, the media should bring to the limelight.

Sport attitude towards the physically challenged:

In the past, the physically challenged were treated differently with discrimination and not treated equally with the others. But now, this scenario has changed. The Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) now encourages and recognizes sportsmen that are physically challenged.

Far East and South Pacific (FESPIC) Games for the disabled conducted by the FESPIC Games Federation, creates an environment where all the physically challenged sportsmen can participate. For the 2002 FESPIC Games, the Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) had a strong team of 63 athletes and bagged 22 medals as of which 3 are Gold medals.

The 2006 International Wheelchair and Amputate Sports (IWAS) World Games have been held at Bangalore, India. This clearly shows the changing attitude of the Indian society towards the physically handicapped sportsmen.

Conclusion:

The Indian Government and society attitude towards sports and sportsmen has been very sad but it's changing now as the society has now become more aware as to why sports have to be encouraged. For this process to be sped up, more catalysts are needed. Here are a few suggestions.

- The Government should invest more in the development of sports infrastructure at school and college levels. Even though this does not yield immediate results, but in the future, many talented youth will soon represent India.
- The sponsors should hold more talent recognition programs for various sports to recognize the unrecognized young talents in every corner of the country.
- The sport authorities should not allow any sort of mal-practice. For instance, match fixing in Cricket and taking steroids by the athletes.
- The educational institutions should start encouraging the students to take up a sport and practice it passionately.
- More scholarships should be awarded to the students that are good at a sport and have to potential to represent the country at competitions.

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