

Sports Neglected Sector in the Indian Scenario

Sports per se is a valued business. It not only involves talent but stringent discipline and best coaching. The world's best players and Olympic winners are a result of such maneuver.

The Indian governments in the last 68 years of democracy were ridden with the development agenda strictly concerned with economic development and sports has always been treated as a luxury in terms of financial budgets and allowance. It might seem strange that the only aspiration seeded among Indian sportsmen was to have a government job attached to being a sports personality rather than thinking beyond these boundaries. A sport training nevertheless was highly expenditure budget which had non conformance to likely winning of medals in the international scenario. Moreover, sports activity had never bestowed players with cash driven benefits as against a career in professional studies or cinema with the kind of hard work put in by the players. Even in today's time we hardly see any motivation among majority of the youth to take up sports as a career. Cut throat competition and favoritism politics is another demotivate which keeps potentially worthy sportsperson out of this profession.

Sports has always suffered a step child treatment when it came to allocation of budgets and has never been treated as an important agenda. If India has made a mark in the world scenario it is only because of the passion of players like PT Usha in the past and the present Olympic winners. There was no Governments push or support in reality. Individuals have taken to heart to fight it out at such international events on their own and with whatever little exposure they have managed from their associates. This does not happen with the International athletes who have probability of success rate of 100% while the same being 50% in case of Indian players. Dedication, passion, urge to perform, hard work are all the parameters which are 100% match among both Indian and International players what differs is the coaching and the investment in these players from the business and government stakeholders. If there is support from the Indian government and businesses for sports participants then there is no doubt that India would produce at least 20-30 medals instead of barely 2-3.

India already has best of talent attributes in players and coaches, but what lacks is the international standards is the infrastructure and again the best part is the reach of this infrastructure to these players and coaches. When we talk about infrastructure we mean the physical and human resource framework and targets for such an infrastructure to produce medals. It is a not a wary fact that our players are aged out, by the time they reach the first International event and the investment goes futile as they are not fit for the next international tournament and our loss becomes 100% certain. This happens because our sports training starts quite late as the identification of talent happens late and most of the future players talent is wasted in being tried and tested until it becomes discoverable to the authorities. Loss of time in discovery of talent leads to the loss in economies of scope for the investment made in terms of finances in such a sportsperson. Financial Investment in training a budding sports personality has to have a time frame to achieve winning medals for atleast 2-3 international games as initial cost for training is huge. Also sports training from an ideal age of 5 is more beneficial to the player as his or her body is more flexible and alert and adapts to the training needs of the sport. It is very evident that players like Sachin Tendulkar who were trained from a small age of 3 have yielded super performances in their games.

Sports development and its conjunction with political interests has come to light recently and that too in cricket with the recent popularity of the game and attraction of financial returns in this game. Precisely 3 decades back it was possibly the only game played on Indian shores as fireless war between the warring countries of India and Pakistan. The art of playing this game was mostly lost and what mattered was falling of wicket by hook and crook. As hockey or football was not a populist game amongst the countries and existed more in the western world it did not attract popularity that cricket did. So to say, even the other games in the sports field which could bring national honors also lacked populous interest. Even there were winners, the popularity did not result into much fanfare. In course of times cricket managed to come out of this shield of attention and established for itself an identity with the BCCI becoming a prestigious body in the field of cricket. However, hockey or football who did receive some attention two decades back lost their position in terms of financial budgets to cricket eventually losing their shine.

India needs to take sports very seriously and needs to adopt a prevalent approach towards its development. An active sports body in the form of commission needs to be emboldened which will have under its wings the most competitive sports divisions like wrestling, gymnastics, badminton ,tennis, rowing etc. The commission should have human resource of International standards for detecting talent at age 5 and training infrastructure, physical and digital. Special stipends for such sports talent is also an important criteria for building not only their motivation but their confidence. The time horizon for producing probable winners should be for at least 2-3 international games with a time frame of 20 years from the inception of training.