



## RELEVANCE OF RURAL SPORTS AMONG STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

The recent success of India at the Olympics is a commendable achievement – with many firsts added to the kitty. The athletes from rural India remain the heroes of this success. Many of these sports find their roots in the ancient Indian tradition of sports. In recent times, the Government of India and State governments have taken multiple initiatives to groom athletes for professional sports. However, there is a long way before India emerges as a sporting nation in its truest sense. Sports have to be a part of a child's growing up. The National Education Policy 2020 offers a window of opportunity to integrate sports as a non-alienable part of the curriculum in schools and colleges. The network of schools and colleges makes a perfect platform to scale sports to reach each household. The essay argues that with an initiative like One State One Sport, both – scale and future champions can be created.

### **Introduction:**

Integrating sports with education is a key reason for increasing participation, as it was for Khangar. The right-to-education act of 2009 requires sporting facilities in every school, and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), a central government education system, makes sports mandatory.

A common thread that binds these athletes – apart from their spirit of excellence and service to the nation – is their rural background. It's a testimony to the fact that rural India has been a powerhouse of extraordinary talent. Rural India is abundant with sports and games which are local and unique in each state. These games and sports have served multiple purposes – keeping people fit, maintaining harmony, channelizing the youth's energy in constructive areas, keeping them away from substance abuse, and pulling the youth out of poverty among many other benefits. The Government of India, in recent years, has taken several initiatives such as Khelo India, TOPS Scheme, etc to build India as a sporting nation with a great amount of emphasis in the rural areas. While these initiatives are commendable, there is a long way to go in creating a bustling sports culture in India – rural and urban both. In this essay, we explore the trajectory of sports in India (with a focus on rural sports and rural India), the intrinsic and extrinsic values of sports, pathbreaking reforms taken by states and the central government, linkages between education and sports in the light of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and suggest few measures to reinvigorate and institutionalize rural sports through policy measures.

### **IMPORTANCE OF RURAL SPORTS**

Sports is hardly the priority in a majority of Indian households. Most Indian parents would prefer their children to become engineers, doctors, lawyers, or secure government jobs compared to a career in sports. This is primarily due to a lack of means, financial gains, and job security. However, the current government has taken a keen interest in sports and has implemented several sports initiatives to curb these



challenges. The Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS) is one such initiative that must be credited for India's most successful Olympic campaign. To put medal winners on the podium, TOPS engaged reputed sportspersons to identify potential medal winners by an objective process, with the selected athletes guaranteed complete support through customised programmes delivered professionally, bypassing bureaucratic delays.

### **Rural Sports in India: Ancient to Modern**

Sports have always been a part of the common life in India for ages. There are several pieces of evidence of the existence of vibrant sports activities in India. Our epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are full of incidences of sports such as archery, wrestling, horse-riding, chariot-racing, etc. For instance, wrestling has been a highly popular sport even during the times of Mahabharata. Known as Malla-yuddha, it saw participation from legendary characters such as Bhima, Balram, and Jarasandha – who have been mentioned as the greatest wrestlers in the epic. Today, India is known as a powerhouse in wrestling with several outstanding accolades gained at the international fora – the commonwealth games, the world championships, and the Olympics.

One of the greatest things to have happened in the wrestling world is the evolution and growth of female wrestling. This one development has dismantled the concept of females as the fairer sex --often used to denote the fragility and physical weakness of women -- and challenged the gender role and occupation for women. The young girls and women from rural India have role models --who are like them, come from similar backgrounds, and overcame challenges to succeed. The legend of the Phogat sisters has changed the outlook of patriarchs, many have become champions of gender equality and promote girls in sports. It is no surprise that a new generation of female sports wrestlers like Sakshi Malik (the first Indian female wrestler to win a medal at the Olympics) have come up, performing exceedingly well at the national and international forums. From ancient times till date, wrestling continues to enthrall the youth and has emerged as one of India's strongholds in modern sports times.

It's a great achievement that many of these sports still survive and thrive in India. Some of the other early rural sports which have withstood the tide of time and continue to attract youth from rural areas have been discussed in the following section.

### **Governmental initiatives:**

Several initiatives have been announced to promote a fitter and healthier India. Some of the prominent ones include:

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan - While developments in water and sanitation might seem irrelevant to the world of sports, ensuring optimal hygiene and access to sanitation facilities are stepping stones towards creating a healthier future for generations to come.
- Eliminating open defecation has a significant positive impact on health. Read more on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the link.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan, Integrated Child Development Services and Anaemia Mukta Bharat. o Mental health has been included as an important focus area in the National Youth Policy, 2020.
- Robust mental health plays a vital role in fitness and sports as well.

- Khelo India o Fit India Movement - Fit India initiative seeks to improve fitness levels for all age groups. The focus is on incorporating behaviour change and integrating fitness into the daily regimen of citizens.
- International Day of Yoga - The government has placed renewed and sustained emphasis on Yoga. Yoga has emerged as a multi-dimensional solution to many health challenges.
- The government constituted a Ministry of AYUSH to harness traditional learning and systems of medicine.

The Government of India went the extra mile to support its contingent of paralympians. Avani Lekhara, the double medalist, was provided with a computerized digital target and an expensive air rifle to practice at home while Bhavina Patel, the silver medalist, was equipped with an Ottobock Wheelchair and a Table Tennis robot called Butterfly- Amicus Prime. No wonder, the 47 members Paralympic contingent converted the opportunity provided under the TOPS scheme into golds, silvers, and bronzes – a total of 19 medals for India at the Tokyo Olympics.



While the TOPS scheme aimed at polishing existing talent for higher results, the Government of India has designed a future-looking scheme to develop a pool of talent from the remotest part of the country through the Khelo India Scheme. 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.







Under the Khelo India Scheme, talent search has been started at the grassroots level in two categories: a) Sports potential talent identification and b) Proven talent identification. A zonal approach has been taken by the government in the identification of talent. Grassroot Zonal Talent Identification committees have been formed to scour the remotest part of the country for spotting talent across 20 disciplines in the age group 8 to 14 years, wherein the country has the potential /advantage to excel at the international level.



### **New challenges in the development of rural sports in the construction of New Countryside**

Unbalanced development of rural sports The imbalance of China's economic development, regional differences also created the imbalance of the development of rural sports. At present, the farmer sports values from the beginning of "labor substitution" to "healthy entertainment". However, in the western rural areas of our country and some underdeveloped area, due to the economic development lags behind, rural sports basically in the state. No one shows any interest in some areas, farmers have fitness needs, but the objective conditions can not meet the basic needs of hard to get up; some areas, poor farmers' physical health status, but not aware of the exercise needs.

The increasing mobility of the population But with a large number of rural labor transfer, many educated, knowledgeable in the full vigour of life, farmers in the outflow of the "empty nest" the trend is obvious. More and more "empty nest" the old man, left-behind children constitute a special group of people in the growing and a common social phenomenon. Due to the lack of love, affection hunger left-behind children, introverted and withdrawn. Easily influenced by some bad behavior. Many left-behind children without school, truancy, dropouts have occurred. The emergence of these phenomena, not only make the new rural construction is facing severe challenges, also make the new rural sports organization work is facing new problems.

Tax reform brings new impact A direct consequence of the tax reform led to the development of rural sports is that public funding gap larger, which including sports public funds decline, makes the number of sports funds is difficult, especially in poor and backward areas, will be more difficult situation.



## **DEVELOPMENT COUNTER MEASURES OF RURAL SPORTS**

Focus on farmers, based on villages The new rural construction can not be ignored the role of rural sports. To solve the problem of peasant sports, the relationship between social sports situation, is also related to the overall situation of the new rural construction. Therefore, we need to establish a "farmer oriented" thought, with comprehensive, coordinated, the scientific concept of development to farmers' physical and mental health put on the schedule, to achieve the ultimate concern of farmers.

### **Improve the sports facilities maintenance system**

The development of new rural sports should be based on the sports infrastructure construction as the breakthrough point, combined with the actual situation, the development of rural social economy will integrate resources, sports facilities and local rural infrastructure plan. The construction of sports facilities should be included in the local government work plan, the formation of government support, relying on the society, should open up the market and all the people involved in the operation mechanism, according to local conditions, make full use of existing public Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, facilities in rural areas, and as far as possible to play sports fitness, culture, etc.. At the same time gathering function of sports facilities and sports organizations closely combined activities of construction, for the sports venue into a fixed mass morning or evening.

### **Establish the system of farmers' physical fitness monitoring**

Establish and improve the national physique monitoring system, can provide a scientific basis for farmers to participate in physical exercise. The district sports administrative departments to send physical inspection car, to the countryside for determination of farmers free fitness. At the same time should organize relevant experts held a sports fitness and life science lectures, the obligation to carry out fitness guidance and health advisory services. Every year there are plans to target the rural masses according to different ages and areas of scientific sampling, detection of farmers', do the national physique test in the implementation of work in the rural areas.

### **Give full play to the advantages of rural sports**

The leisure life is monotonous, less interference factors, attractive variety of sports activities on farmers may be larger than the urban residents. Sports is dependent on its highly competitive, changes to attract the audience and participants, the essential characteristics of these sports is Fu Henong people interest in taste and cultural value. A considerable proportion of farmers the population, such as the elderly, women rarely participate in productive labor, their leisure time more than urban residents. Should fully show the sports charm, guide the leisure orientation of them.

### **Give full play to the role of rural grassroots organizations**

The operation of the most basic unit of rural sports is a statutory administrative village, the village committee jurisdiction of the community, it is built for the premise. The main functions of the villagers' committee and rural construction work of village committee is highly consistent. It as the villagers' self management, self education, self serving grassroots autonomous organizations in itself responsible for convenience services, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the villagers, to carry out the construction of spiritual civilization in rural area for residents, villagers public affairs and public welfare undertakings and other rural community construction tasks.

Integration of sports resources in rural schools In recent years, with the help of software and hardware, power of primary school, let rural school resources play an important role in the development of peasants' sports activities, there is a shortcut to quickly develop the rural sports. In the very lack of rural sports resources, school sports and rural sports two-way junction with each other is not only human, effective use of resources. So many problems in the development of rural sports can be solved, but also for sports culture, the dissemination of knowledge also has a very important significance.

Strengthen the sports management of migrant workers and migrant workers As a huge and very special group, sports participation and their physical and mental health of migrant workers to fully implement the national fitness program outline, to improve the physical quality of the whole nation, has the important significance of constructing the harmonious well-off society. The local government should according to the local economy and education, the scale and level of health work development. The development of sports of migrant workers into the overall economic and social development of rural culture and education in the planning of the development planning of Migrant Workers Sports formulation meets the actual situation.



The Eklavya Model Residential Schools scheme of the government is targeted at providing holistic education to the students from ST category in tribal areas of the country. There is a lot of focus on sports in these schools. Centre of Excellence for Sports (CoE for Sports) has been planned and implemented across Eklavya Model Residential Schools. This Centre of Excellence will have specialized state-of-the-art facilities for one identified individual sport and one group sport in each State with scientific backup along with specialized training, boarding and lodging facilities, sports kit, sports equipment, competition exposure, insurance, medical expenses, etc. as per norms of Sports Authority of India.

It has to be emphasized that sports is a scientific discipline and requires a strategic roadmap to develop future talent and infuse a sporting culture in India. There are certain sports where Indians have a comparative advantage either because of their genetic build or the prolonged assimilation within certain sports. It might be useful to start a campaign namely One State One Sport, wherein each state government will identify a major sport in which it has a competitive advantage along with other sports which may be accorded a little lesser priority.

### **Conclusion**

The value of sports as a means of promoting disciplines and social harmony is well recognized the world over. The Government of India has launched a number of



sports promotion schemes under various universities on different aspects. It is hoped that initiatives taken in universities will help India grow into a sports power to reckon with. Their commitment is to process the sports proposals received expeditiously and efficiently. The Government is trying to promote sports education in universities through provision of necessary physical facilities, infrastructure, sport aids and equipment, training, orientation, etc. There is need for creation of a sports climate in the universities and generating a consciousness in every student of the need to be physically fit and to participate in sports activities. Sports facilities should be selected for promotion keeping in mind the facilities available, particularly for rural students. Universities in India require setting up of sports infrastructure in a planned manner and more efficient use of available infrastructure and coaching facilities with promotional activities.

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