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India's present stand point and future possibilities regarding paralympics

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Abstract

The paralympic games is an emerging sports field and as well as industry in India right now. Although the journey from the first paralympic games in 1960 to the latest edition in 2020 Tokyo games was not easy for a country like India where sports is still not getting that much important which needed. In between these years there were few years where India even cannot able to participate. But in current situation the scenario for para-sports is changing which reflects in the medal tally of latest edition. The purpose of the study was to observe the current status of Paralympics and para-athletes in India; and also, to observe the scope for special population of India in para-sports. To know about the current status, the researcher collected the data from various online sources and also conducted an interview with the president and secretary of Bengal Paralympic association. The gathered information reflects the progression of India in Paralympics, selection process, budgeting and various facilities given to the para-athletes. The result showed is a positive one which indicates about a rapid progression in para-sports field in India, although there are still many gaps remained which need to be filled in the future for a better performance, specially more specific training, talent identification and proper recognition.

Keywords: Paralympics, para-athletes special population

Introduction

The history of the Olympics began some 2,300 years ago. Their origin lays in the Olympian Games, which were held in the Olympia area of ancient Greece. Although there are some theories on its initial purposes, the Games have been said to have started as a festival of art and sport, to worship gods. The ancient Olympic Games, however, ended in 393 because of the outbreaks of wars in the region in which they were held. After a 1,500 year absence of the ancient Olympic Games, the event was resumed in the late nineteenth century, thanks to the efforts of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator. In 1894, his proposal to revive the Olympic Games was unanimously approved at the International Congress in Paris, and the first Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece, two years later.

Sport for athletes with an impairment has existed for more than 100 years, and the first sport clubs for the deaf were already in existence in 1888 in Berlin. It was not until after World War II however, that it was widely introduced. The purpose of it at that time was to assist the large number of war veterans and civilians who had been injured during wartime. Stoke Mandeville Games, On 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the London 1948 Olympic Games, Dr. Guttman organised the first competition for wheelchair athletes which he named the Stoke Mandeville Games, a milestone in Paralympic history. The Stoke Mandeville Games later became the Paralympic Games which first took place in Rome, Italy, in 1960 featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then they have taken place every four years.

India first took part in Paralympics in the year 1968 at Tei Aviv where 10 para-athletes participated but India did not win any medal. Since then India has participated in Paralympic games till now except 1976 and 1980. In the latest edition of 2020 Tokyo Paralympic games India has won the most number of medals, total 31 including 9 golds which was the best performance in their history.

Objective

1. Give an idea about the scope for special population in India in Para-sports and Paralympics.
2. India's current status and stand point regarding Paralympics.

Methodology

The researcher has collected all the data online from the official website of International Paralympic Committee and Paralympic Committee of India. The researcher also

conducted a face-to-face interview with the honourable president and secretary of Bengal Paralympic Association.

Sampling Method

Purposeful sampling method was used in the present study.

Instruments and Tools used

1. Pen and paper
2. Camera for recording of the Interview.
3. Microphone and checklist of questions to be enquired.

Results and Discussion**Table 1:** Medal Tally of India in Paralympic Games

Games	Athletes Participated	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total	Rank
1960 Rome	Did Not Participate					
1964 Tokyo	Did Not Participate					
1968 Tel Aviv	10	0	0	0	0	-
1972 Heidelberg	10	1	0	0	1	25
1976 Toronto	Did Not Participate					
1980 Arnhem	Did Not Participate					
1984 Stoke Mandeville/New York	5	0	2	2	4	37
1988 Seoul	2	0	0	0	0	-
1992 Barcelona	9	0	0	0	0	-
1996 Atlanta	9	0	0	0	0	-
2000 Sydney	4	0	0	0	0	-
2004 Athens	12	1	0	1	2	53
2008 Beijing	5	0	0	0	0	-
2012 London	10	0	1	0	1	67
2016 Rio de Janeiro	19	2	1	1	4	43
2020 Tokyo	54	5	8	6	19	24
Total		9	12	10	31	55

From Table-1 we can observe the progress of India in participation and performance in Paralympics year by year.

Selection process in India for Paralympic games

Selection for the paralympic is a step-by-step process. The para-athletes have to participate in District competitions by their own funding. From the District meets athletes are being selected for the State games. Then the top position holders in the state games are selected for nationals. In the Nation meet, top 6/8/10 athletes selected for the camps of Paralympic games, but they need to qualify the minimum qualification standards (MQS) given by International Paralympic Committee.

The athletes need to practise in the camp for several days. Then the final selection trial is being conducted and athletes are being selected for the paralympic games.

The elite class athletes used to practise under their personal coach for the Paralympic Games and recently a training centre was established in Gandhinagar, Gujrat by The Prime Minister of India specially for the para-athletes.

(The data was collected from Sri Chandan Roy Choudhury, President, Bengal Paralympic Association and Mr. Bhaskar Mukherjee, Secretary, Bengal Paralympic Association)

Government Funding

- Government allocates funds/grants to the PCI to provide Paralympic Athletes with all requisite facilities at par with other sportspersons.
- An additional amount of Rs.10.50 crore spent during the last Paralympic cycle under the TOPS for the para-athletes.
- Para sports have been placed in the 'Priority' category for financial assistance by the Government and all the requisite assistance is provided for training and competitive exposure of the para-athletes, as per the norms laid down for this purpose.

The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) is the recognized National Sports Federation (NSF) dealing with the para-athletes in the country. The PCI is provided funds/grants by Government of India under the Scheme of Assistance to NSFs towards conducting National Coaching Camps, Foreign Exposures, National Championships, Purchase of Equipment, Salary of Coaches and Sports Staff etc. The Paralympic athletes are provided all requisite facilities at par with other sportspersons, besides their special needs.

Table 2: The details of funds provided to the PCI under the Scheme of Assistance to National Sports Federations are as under: (Amount in Rs. Crore)

Year	Budget Allocated	Funds Utilized
2017-18	6.00	3.30
2018-19	6.03	6.35
2019-20	10.00	5.88
2020-21 & 2021-22	10.30	3.81 (Till Nov 2021)

In addition to the above, an amount of Rs.10.50 crore was spent during the last Paralympic cycle under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) for the para-athletes who were medal probable, for the training, Out of Pocket Allowances (OPS), Foreign Exposures, Purchase of Equipment, Sports Science Services etc.

(This information was given by Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports Shri Anurag Thakur in reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.)

Apart from that various state organisations raise their own funds and get fundings from the paralympic committee of India and various organisations, eager to promote the parasports, to organise various competitions and events. Para-athletes also somehow manage their own budget themselves to practise and take part in various competitions.

Funding and sponsorship from various private organisations, companies and NGO's

There are a lot of private and government affiliated companies, banks and organisations who acts as the sponsors of the association and the athletes. They raise funding to promote the sports and also work to make the sports more popular among the society and to support and nurture the para athletes. Some of the organisations are- Indian Oil, JSW, Citi bank, Indian Bank, Vedanta, Khelo India etc.

Apart from that's there are several NGO's, run by various global sports stars of India, like Ozoki by Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra and Go Sports, run by Indian Cricket legend Rahul Dravid, who mainly sponsor the extra ordinary para athletes personally who are going to represent India in Paralympic games.

Conclusion

In the current scenario India is growing day by day in case of para-sports. The results are showing clearly in the Paralympics medal tally of Tokyo games. The current central government, sports ministry supporting a lot by providing funds and facilities to para-athletes, like recently the Central Government has established a sports complex under SAI in Gujarat specially for the para-athletes, so that they can give a better performance at Paralympics. Several NGO'S and private organisations are also sponsoring the sports; Still there are so many gaps need to be filled in parasports in order to achieve a better result.

1. Government need to introduce a proper talent identification process, so that they can choose and nurture para-athletes from very childhood.
2. Government and private organization need to support them throughout the life from childhood to until they become a global star.
3. The para-athletes need to be given a proper and scientific training, nutrition and literacy from very childhood.
4. More awareness needed in the society specially in the sports field.

5. Para-athletes and parasports need much more media spotlight for proper recognition.
6. More individuals need to come up and contribute to the para-sports.

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